BISHOP

VISITOR'S GUIDE

Vacation Center of the High Sierra

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MULE DAYS

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MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND

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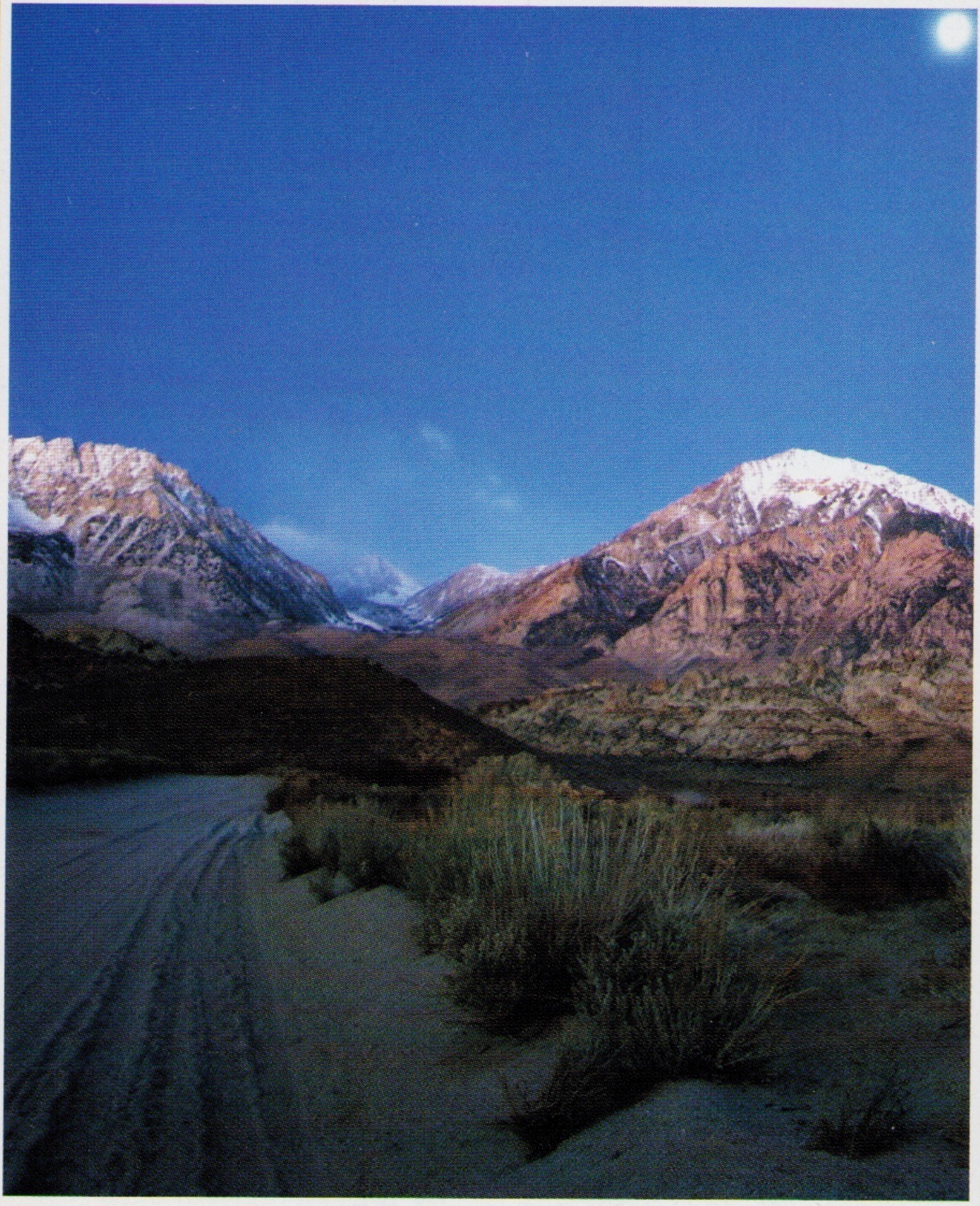
SOUTH LAKE SUNRISE

Lake Sabrina Skyline

Photo by Vern Clevenger

Mount Basin, Mount Humphreys and Mount Tom

Photo by Mike McDermott



A dirt road through the Buttermilks leads up to Mount Tom. Photo by Mike McDermott

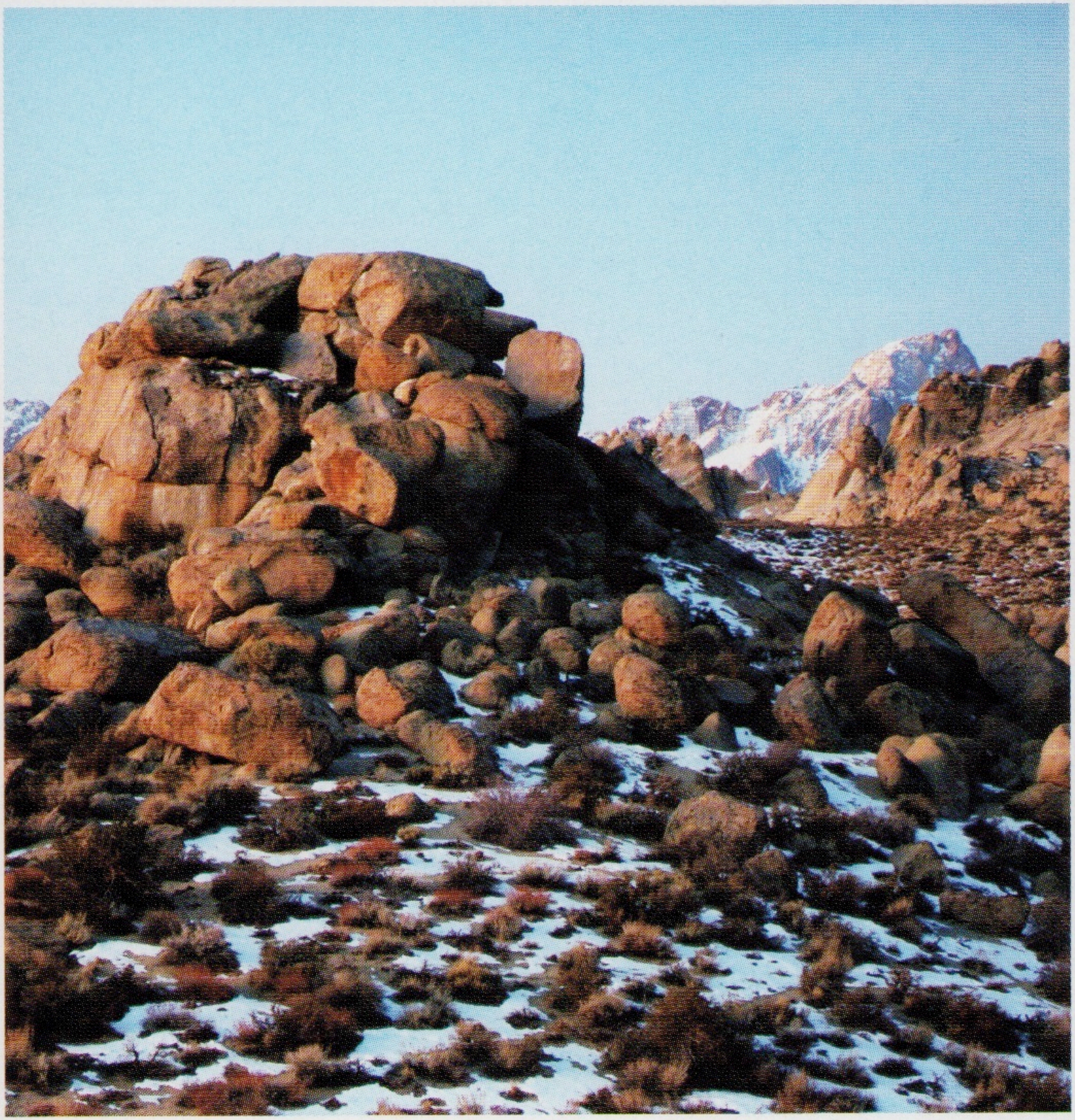


Photo by Mike McDermott

Boulders dot the Buttermilk Country's landscape with Mount Humphreys in the background.

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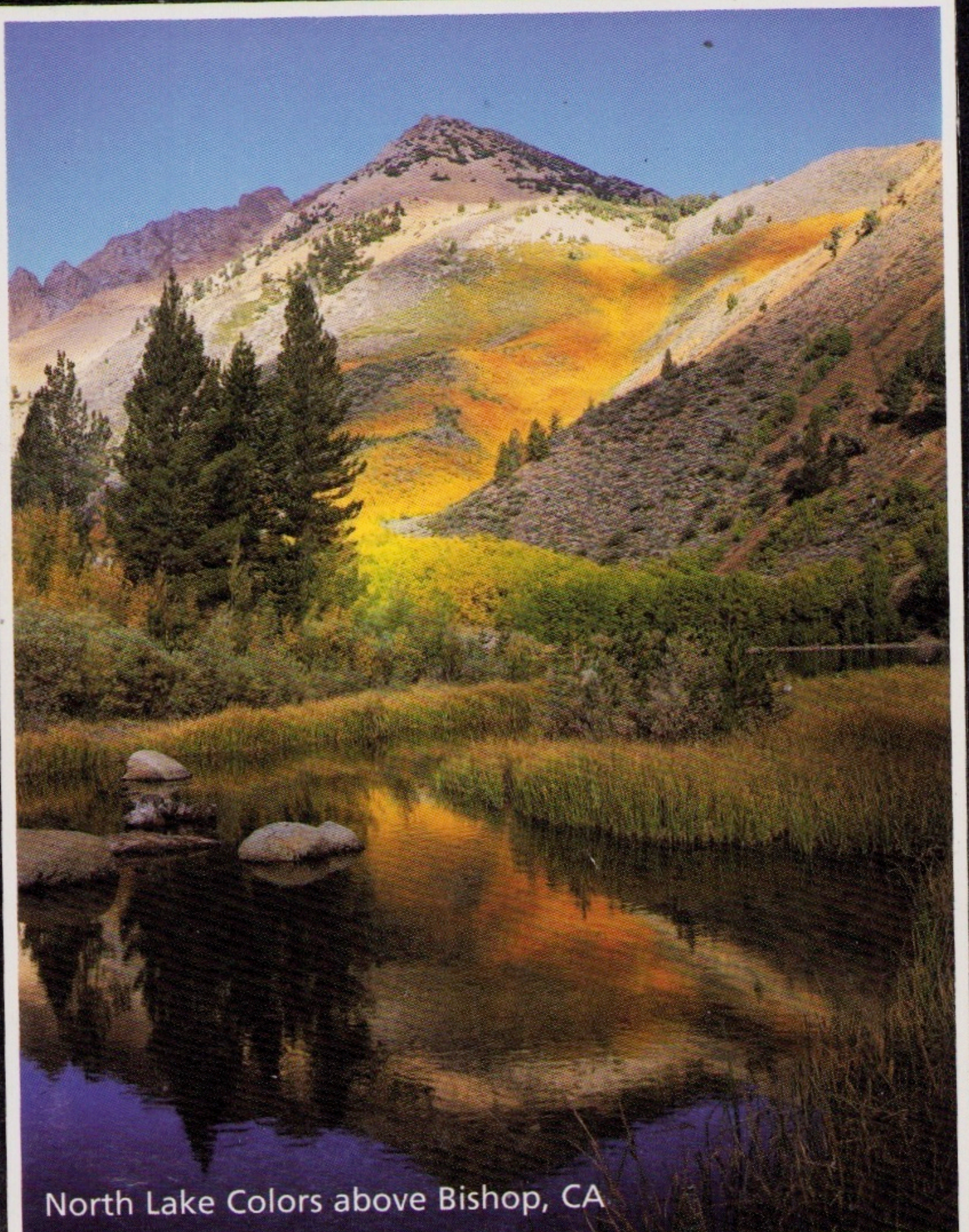
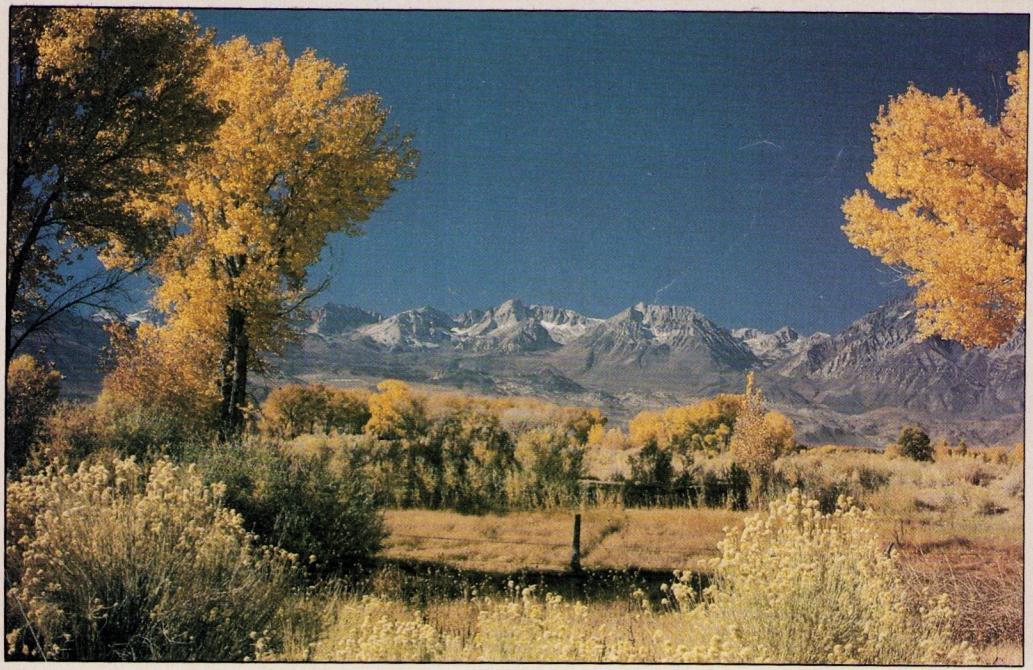


North Lake Colors above Bishop, CA

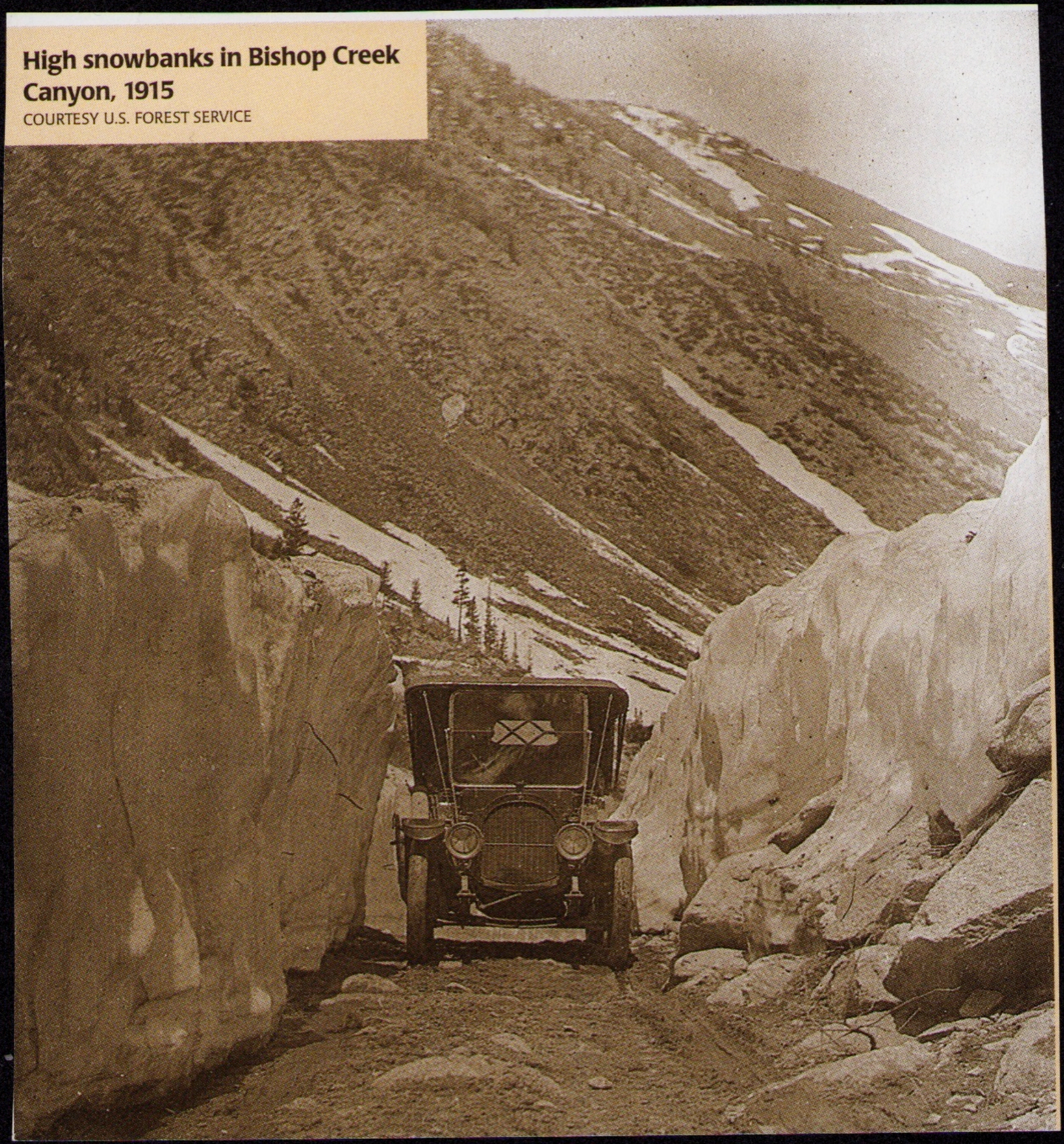


"Sierra Mountain, near Bishop," by Paul Fontaine, Whittier. Nikon FM.

Eastern Sierra Sunrise Over Bishop

Photo by Galen Rowell/Mountain Light Gallery

A buck sits among the sagebrush in the Owens Valley. Photo by Mike McDermott



High snowbanks in Bishop Creek Canyon, 1915

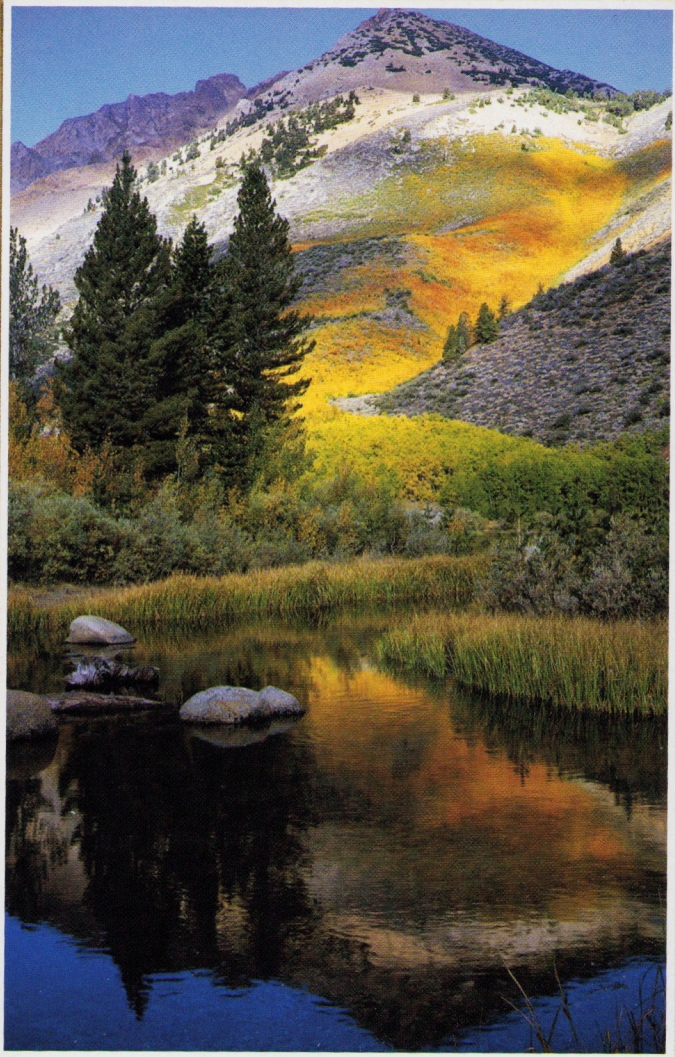
COURTESY U.S. FOREST SERVICE

SERVICES

Photo by Galen Rowell/Mountain Light Gallery

Cardinal Village Skyline

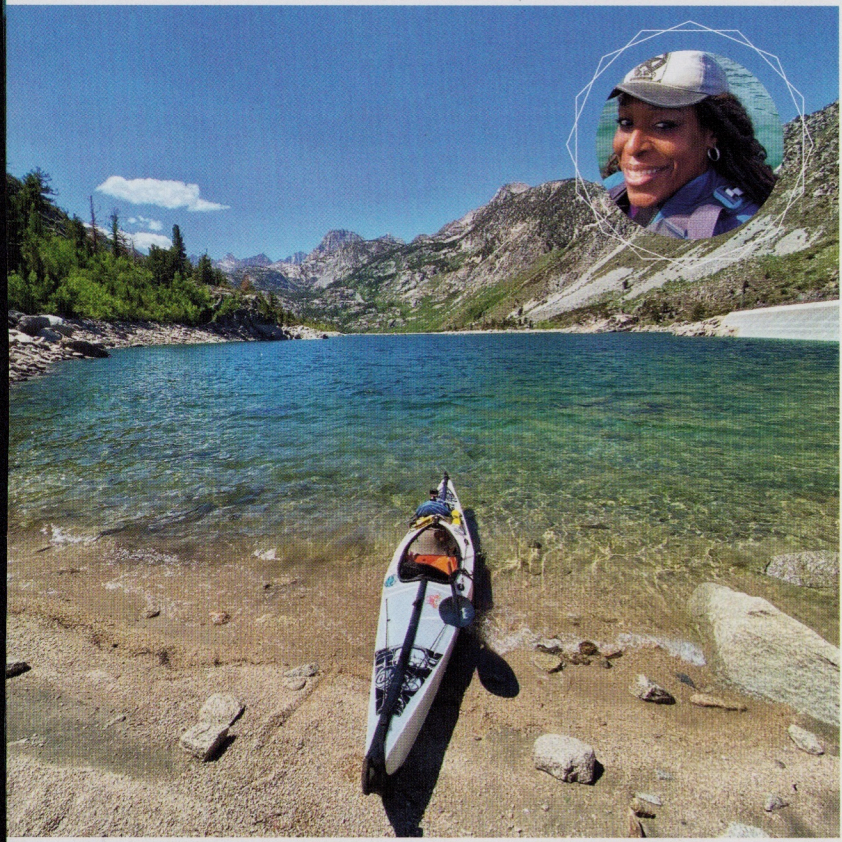
Photo by Vern Clevenger



Autumn colors brighten up a North Lake landscape. Photo by Vern Clevenger

Photo courtesy of Lone Pine Chamber

The inaugural winner of the Great Shoot-Out for dawn at Farmers Pond in Bishop, photograph by Alex Pollini.



KIMBERLY WHEATON, KAYAKER AND NURSE, LOS ANGELES

LAKE SABRINA, CALIFORNIA

"I was procrastinating driving back to L.A. and saw a sign that read, 'Lake Sabrina 18 miles.' I'd never heard of Lake Sabrina and didn't have high hopes because there was nothing but desert around me. But I stayed the course, and sure enough this beautiful mountain lake suddenly came into view. Knowing that I could have my Oru folding kayak set up in 12 minutes, I thought, *Even if it's just for an hour I need to get on that water.* What was supposed to be a one-hour paddle turned into me having to coax myself off the water four hours later. The beauty I experienced that day was because I decided to follow a sign."

Early touring in Dutch John Meadows, Bishop Creek Canyon
COURTESY U.S. FOREST SERVICE

YOUR SCENE

EDITOR'S CHOICE

HIGH SIERRA THRILLS AND CHILLS

Each year, Julie Kirby treks out to Bishop Creek in the Sierra to catch the autumn colors. Last October, light snow fell the night before she arrived. She had set out hoping to beat the snowfall, but the precipitation turned out to be a bonus. "I had never photographed the golden leaves dusted with snow, before the cold turned them black and the wind ripped them away," she said. The Glendale resident used a Canon PowerShot A720 IS to photograph the wintry scene.

TO SUBMIT A PHOTO

Send unaltered original files to *yourscene-travel@latimes.com* or post them at *latimes.com/yourscene*. Winners agree that The Times may reproduce photos in any format.

WEB BUZZ

Enjoy Bishop's Big Backyard

Bishop's setting is an irresistible draw to outdoor enthusiasts, artists and businesses alike. The town is world famous for its scenery, hiking, fishing, climbing, hunting, bakeries and for its mules. Bishop and its surrounding area is the primary commercial and population hub for Inyo County and west central Nevada.

The Bishop Mule Days Celebration is a six-day event taking place Tuesday through Sunday the week before Memorial Day on the Tri-County Fairgrounds in Bishop, California. The 14-show event showcases mules in English, Dressage, Driving, Reining and Youth competitions, with the top competitors vying for World Championships in all disciplines. The championships, comedy classes, packing contests and world class specialty acts all take center stage in multiple arenas Friday through Sunday. The world-famous Mule Days Parade on Saturday, is one of the largest non-motorized parades in the nation.

Bishop also offers an abundance of outdoor recreation and cultural activities. Highway 168 travels deep into the Sierra Nevada Mountains, providing access to scores of campgrounds and trailheads. North Lake, South Lake and Sabrina Lake are all easily accessed from Bishop Creek Canyon, as are miles of some of the finest trout fishing streams in California.

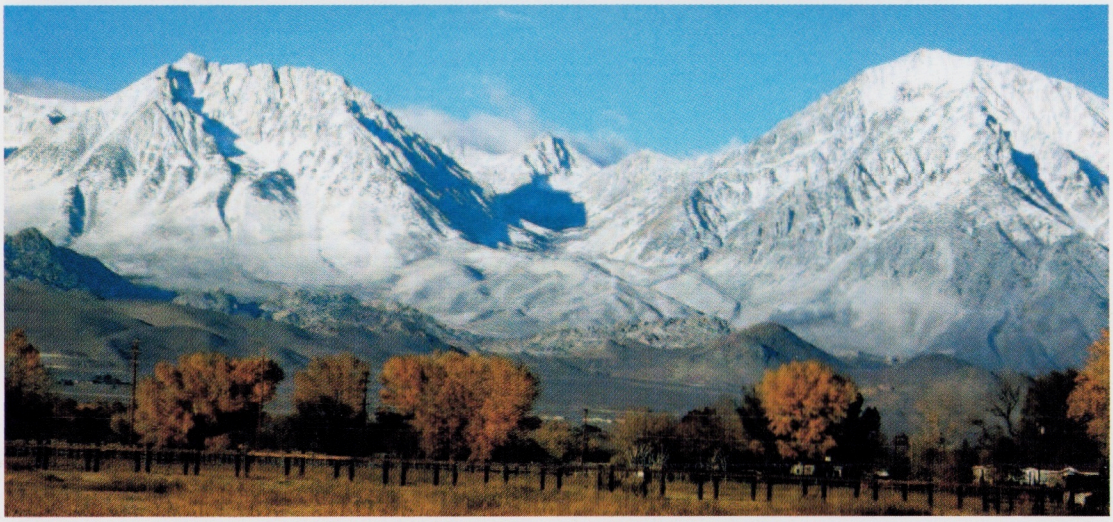
A multitude of additional recreational areas are found in the Bishop area. Pine Creek, Rock Creek, the Owens River Gorge, Fish Slough and Pleasant Valley Reservoir are all less than 30 minutes from downtown Bishop.

Rock climbing has become another very popular form of outdoor recreation in the Bishop area. The "Buttermilks" about 10 miles west of Bishop, offers excellent bouldering opportunities for everyone from beginners to climbers with the highest of skills.

The Paiute-Shoshone Cultural Center on West Line St reflects the history and culture of the Nuumu (Paiute) and Newe (Shoshone) people. The Cultural Center showcases the art and life way of these indigenous people, who have lived in the Eastern Sierra for thousands of years. Visitors to the Cultural Center will also enjoy cultural displays, collections of Native American artifacts, historical archives and media.

About 5 miles northeast of Bishop is Laws Railroad Museum. Located on the site of the former Laws Railroad station and rail yard, the land, 1883 depot, locomotive and rail cars, and other buildings were donated to Inyo County and the City of Bishop by the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1960. The museum is operated by the Bishop Museum and Historical Society. The Laws Museum also houses an extensive collection of natural, civic, literary and ecclesiastical artifacts and history of the Owens Valley.

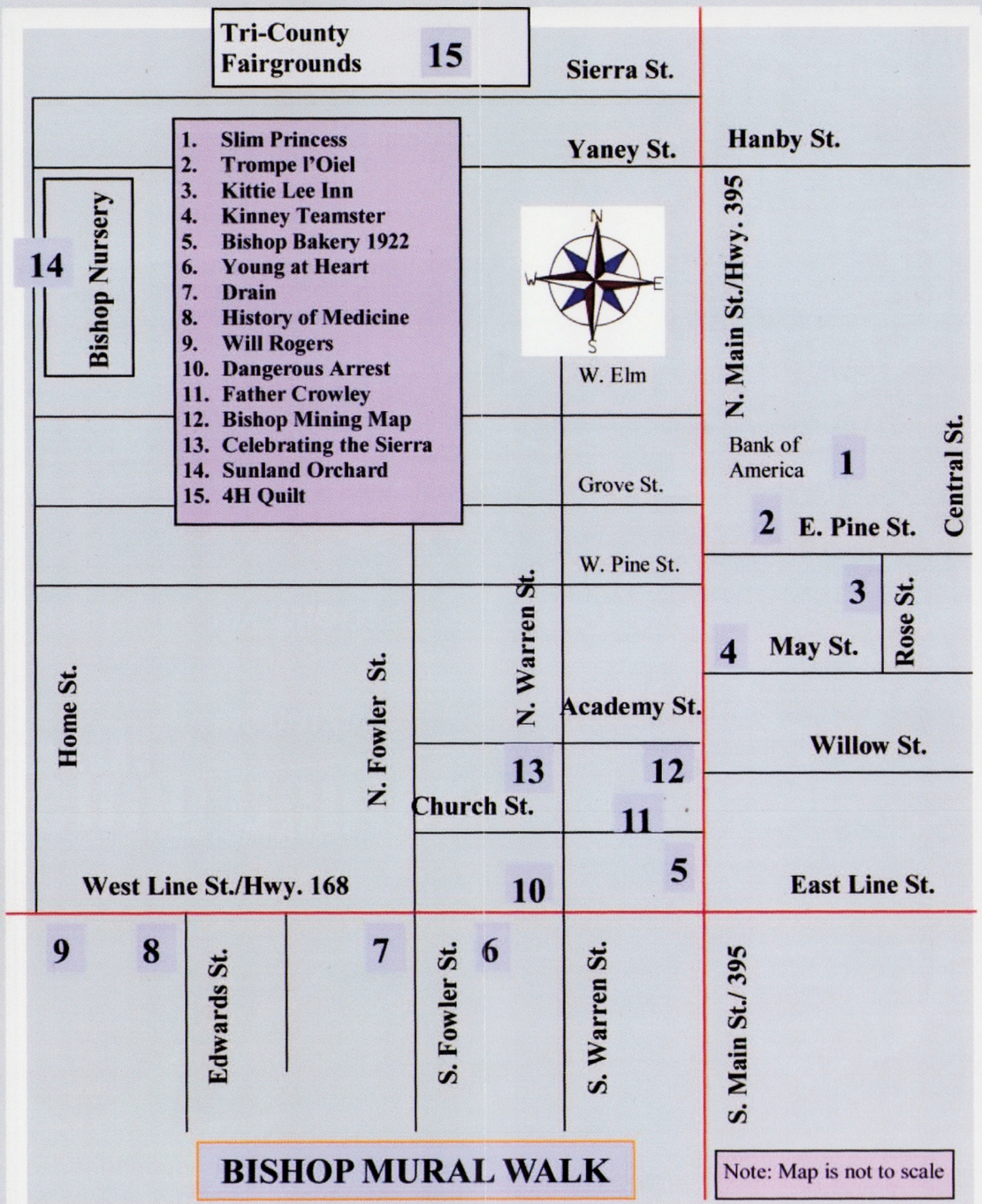
You'll find no shortages of services in the town of Bishop. With several hundred motel rooms, more than 30 restaurants and nearly 50 stores, you can rest assured that whatever your need, you'll be able to find it in Bishop.

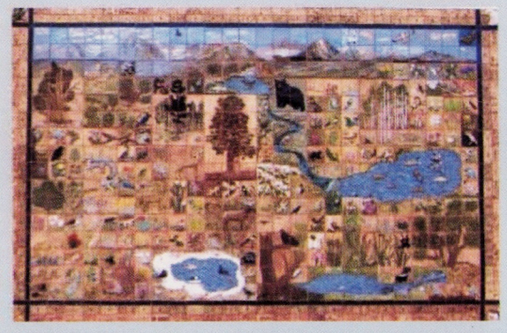


Name That Eastside View

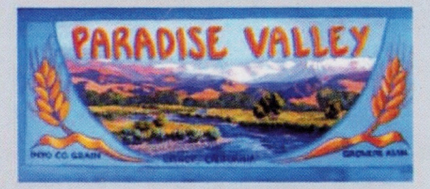
FALLING FOR BISHOP'S COLORS

Gilbert Marquez Sr. and a buddy stopped in Bishop, Calif., while on a fishing trip, ducking into the popular Erick Schat's Bakkery for sandwiches. "After we left the bakery, I told my friend that we should walk across the street to Bishop City Park, where I ended up taking this picture," says Marquez of Hacienda Heights. "The fall colors were too beautiful to pass up." He used a Canon PowerShot SD1000. 12-13-09





13. "Celebrating the Sierra" by Patricia Holton, Betty Cameron, Susanne Olson, Margaret Phelps, Sara Steck, Coleen Randolph, Earl Gann, Carolyn Lynch & Carol Conner-Turner, 2011. This natural history mural of ceramic tile and mosaic includes 237 species of Eastern Sierra flora and fauna. Each tile was hand sculpted and painted by one of 110 community members. It is dedicated to the committed volunteers of Inyo County Search and Rescue.
210 Academy Street, *Bishop Library.*
http://fall.cerrocoso.edu/muralproject/mural/index.html

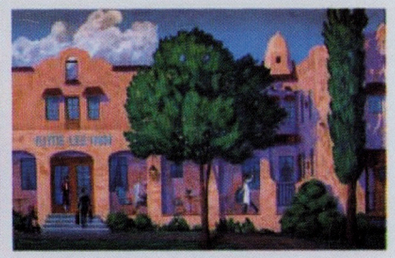


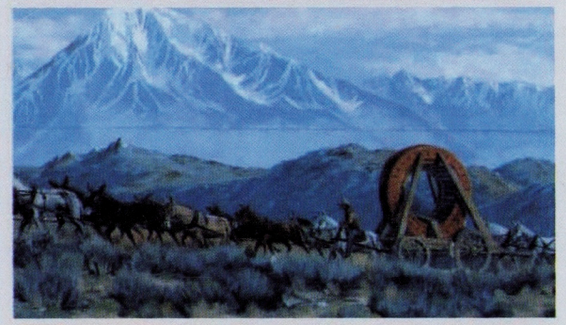
14. "The Sunland Orchard circa 1912" by Janet Essley, *2005.* Starting in the 1870s, early settlers trapped the Owens River to irrigate fields and orchards in the remote valley and created, for a short time, one of the most productive agricultural areas in California.
789 Home Street, inside *Bishop Nursery.*

15. "4-H Quilt" by Janet Essley, 2001. This mural honors the 4H children, their activities and the 100-year anniversary of the 4H Club. **Tri-County Fairgrounds, Sierra St. & Fair Drive, *Douglas Robinson building.***

Bishop Mural Society

VISITOR'S GUIDE

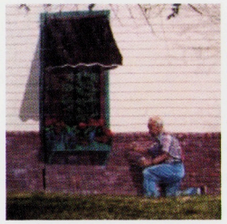




The Bishop Mural Society is a non-profit corporation, founded in 1977 by Barbara and David Williams, Dan Wells and John Knowlton. The society is supported by its members and donors.
We appreciate your support!

bishopmurals.com
760.872.2428

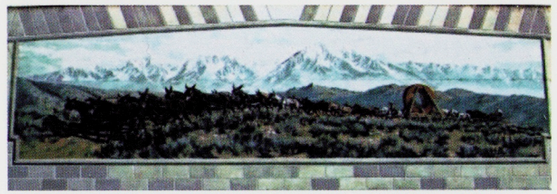
1. "The Slim Princess" by Robert Thomas, John Knowlton and Richard Perkins, 2000. This mural depicts Laws, a thriving railroad depot and community, just outside of Bishop circa 1909. The railroad line, called the "Slim Princess" by the local population, was a major transportation resource until Highway 395 was paved. The depot was built in 1883, and served the Owens Valley until April 30, 1959, when the line from Laws to Keeler was abandoned. Laws is now home to Laws Railroad Museum. **175 East Pine Street, *Fendon's Furniture, north wall.***



2. "Trompe L'Oiel Mural" by Bob Unkrich, John Knowlton, Barbel Williams & David Williams, 1997. 462 Rose Street, *Studio 27 and Eastern Sierra Realty.*

This mural was painted to "fool the eye" by matching the windows, awnings and siding of the adjacent building. Mural Society founder David Williams is pictured as in real life.

3. "Kittie Lee Inn" by Robert Thomas, John Knowlton and Rich Perkins, 2000. The Kittie Lee Inn was built in 1924 at this location. It was the height of luxury during Hollywood's heyday, and many celebrities stayed there. During WWII, the dining room was turned into a dorm for military pilots training at Bishop Airport, and later was remodeled into a fine restaurant, The Copper Kettle. The old inn was torn down in 1965, and a series of restaurants have been located in the new building ever since. **524 N. Main Street, *Whiskey Creek Restaurant.***



4. "The Ernest Kinney Teamster Family Mural" by Robert Thomas, John Knowlton Jenna Morgenstein, Rich Perkins, Tory Michener and J.T. Schmidt, 1999. Conceived by Ernest Kinney of Bishop, this mural is a triptych (three panels in one mural). The wall also incorporates *trompe l'oiel* (fool the eye) decoration to enhance its setting on the building. The central panel illustrates a twenty-two-animal team of horses and mules going up and over Sand Canyon to Power Plant #3 on Bishop Creek. There are 18 in front and four pushers in the back. The orange generator part is part of power plant machinery and weighs approximately 20 tons. It is still in use today. **362 North Main St., *Union Bank, north wall.***

5. "Bishop Bakery, 1922" by Janet Essley, 1998. Since the 1850's, Basque sheepherders have trailed their flocks in the area. The shepherds taught their time-honored recipe for a thick-crusted, tasty bread to Bob and Louisa Schoch, the owners of the Bishop Bakery. The original "Sheepherders' Bread from the Pyrenees country was baked in brick ovens and lasted several weeks without spoiling. **125 North Main Street, *Bishop Art Supply.***

6. "Young at Heart" by John Pugh, 2002. Inscribed with a land title, this layered core sample of Bishop earth represents a sedimentary survey of the town's heritage. Digging down through the bullets, spurs, old keys, Bristlecone pine roots, and Paiute arrowheads, we see Mammoth tusks and Sabertooth skulls. A dog named "Hunter" helps to 'ground' this piece in the present. **230 W. Line Street, *Inyo Mono Title.***

7. "Drain" by John Pugh, 2005. The artist has graphically illustrated the piping of water from the Eastern Sierra. In this controversial piece, an agricultural Shangri La appears as a mural within a mural. This vision of the valley's past derives from old paintings and photos, book descriptions, interviews, and visits to less affected areas of the Owens Valley. **400 West Line St., *Window Fair, east wall.***

8. "The History of Medicine at the Local Pharmacy" by Philip Slagter, 2003. This portrait of long time resident Dr. Robert Denton is one of five colorful scenes depicting local people, traditional medicine from plants and an old-time soda fountain. **644 West Line St., *Dwayne's Friendly Pharmacy.***

9. "Will Rogers in Bishop" by Philip Slagter, 2003. Will Rogers would come to town, visit the children and buy them ice cream at the local pharmacy/soda fountain. Look for amusing details in the group of children and street scene. Our own Shirley Fendon is seen here as a child. **644 West Line Street, *Dwayne's Friendly Pharmacy, west side.***

10. "A Dangerous Arrest" by Richard Perkins, John Knowlton, Kathy Sexton, Jenna Morgenstein, Mary Gipson-Knowlton, 2000. This mural shows an "Old West" event that broke the peace and quiet of Bishop in 1887. **207 W. Line St., *Bishop Police Station.***

11. "Father Crowley" by John Knowlton, Mary Gipson-Knowlton, Kathy Sexton, Jenna Morgenstein and Pat Morgan, 2002. The "Desert Padre," Father John Crowley remains a legendary figure, recognized as the visionary leader who saw the potential for the region, and as a man of faith who dedicated his life to helping its inhabitants. **197 North Main Street, *Body and Soul Salon*. Next to *Joseph's Market.***

12. "Bishop Mining Mural" by Art Mortimer, 2005. This "Mural-in-a-Day was painted by volunteers in conjunction with the California Mural Symposium. The centerpiece map shows some of the now mostly abandoned mines around Bishop, including the Champion Sparkplug Mine and the Pine Creek Tungsten Mine, which are detailed in the photo montages to either side. **285 N. Main St., *Amigo's Mexican Restaurant.***

HEAD QUARTERS BUILDING
PARCHERS RAIN BOW CAMP
SOUTH FORK BISHOP CREEK BISHOP CALIF
FRASHERS FOTO AMONA

I've enjoyed our summer up here pretty well.

POST CARD

CORRESPONDENCE

ADDRESS

Dearest mother
We are beginning to look
for you back in Calif.
I expect to hear every
of some kind over my
head by the first of Nov.
and then will be place
for your and Ethel -
Root so cheer up and
Make plans. Jack write
a letter in a few days. Ran
tired this afternoon.
Loving Children

Mrs. A. P. Levison
c/o Wm Mackey. Route I
Nicholasville
Kentucky.

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1921

A Brief History of Bishop California

by Mike Cheurront

Samuel A. Bishop

The first white American explorers in the Owens Valley of Eastern California included the famous mountain men Jedediah Smith in 1826 and Joseph Walker in 1834. This remote area of California had never been explored by the Spanish and even though it was shown as Mexican territory on early maps, the Eastern Sierra region remained unvisited by them. Present day Walker Lake in western Nevada, the Walker River on the California/Nevada border and Walker Pass in the southern Sierra were named for their discoverer, Joseph Walker.

The most renowned early explorer to visit the area was John C. Fremont. He was the first Republican candidate to run for President of the United States in 1856 and later a famous Union Civil War general. Officially sanctioned by the federal government, his 1845 mapping party to the Eastern Sierra included the celebrated Indian scout Kit Carson, for whom the capitol of Nevada, Carson City, was named. Also in the party were Ed Kern for whom Kern County, California was named, and Richard Owens, who gave his name to the Owens Lake near Lone Pine and later the Owens Valley itself. Fremont lost a cannon that he had brought along in case of Indian attacks somewhere near present day Bridgeport, California (about 80 miles north of Bishop).

The City of Bishop came into being due to the need for beef in a booming mining camp some eighty miles to the north, Aurora, Nevada, (Aurora was believed to be on the other side of the border at that time and was the county seat of Mono County, California). In 1861 cattlemen drove herds of cattle some three hundred miles from the great San Joaquin Valley of California, through the southern Sierra at Walker Pass, up the Owens Valley, and then through Adobe Meadows to Aurora. Along the way, some cattlemen noticed that the unsettled northern Owens Valley was perfect for raising livestock. To avoid the long journey from the other side of the mountains, a few of them decided to settle in the valley.

Driving some 600 head of cattle and 50 horses, Samuel Addison Bishop and his wife along with several hired hands arrived in the Owens Valley on August 22, 1861 from Fort Tejón in the Tehacchapi Mountains. Along with Henry Vansickle, Charles Putnam, Allen Van Fleet, and the McGee brothers, Bishop was one of the very first white settlers in the valley. The cattlemen were soon followed by sheepmen who initially struggled with a lack of forage for their stock in the area. Remnants of these early settler's stone corrals and fences can still be seen north of Bishop along Highway 395 in Round Valley (barb wire fencing was not invented until 1873).

A stone fence from the 1860s along Lower Rock Creek Road (Old Hwy 395) in Round Valley about 9 miles north of Bishop.

Establishing a homestead, the *San Francis Ranch*, along the creek which still bears his name, Samuel Bishop set up a market to sell beef to the miners and business owners in Aurora. One of the residents of Aurora at that time was a young Samuel Clemens who later gained fame as author Mark Twain (see Twain's *Roughing It* for his comments on our area). By1862, a frontier settlement (and later town), known as *Bishop Creek*, was established a couple of miles east of the San Francis Ranch. Though the town continues to prosper, the only reminder of Samuel Bishop's ranch today is a monument placed near the original site at the corner of Highway 168 West and Red Hill Road, two miles west of downtown Bishop.

In 1866, the County of Inyo was established from part of Tulare County. The Eastern High Sierra and the Owens Valley was the western most frontier in America at that time. In 1871, Daniel Bruhn was one of 41 wranglers herding some 3000 wild Spanish mustangs from Stockton, California to Texas. Their travels took them over the High Sierra and into the Owens Valley where they lost over 500 head of horses. The descendants of those horses still roam wild on the California/Nevada border just north of Bishop.

In a letter to his parents, Bruhn wrote: "I write these lines while sitting upon a horse on the ridge of one of the world's highest mountain chains, which separates the states of California and Nevada...[Note; at that time, there was some confusion about the state boundary in eastern California and many believed that the Owens Valley was part of Nevada]."

Commenting on how isolated he felt while in the Owens Valley, Bruhn also mentioned the various shootouts that occurred on the trail. "It is as you may well imagine a wearisome life we that we lead, cut off from nearly all connection with the outside world.... There are times when one does not see a single miserable hut in the course of several days journey. The natural scenery here in the mountains is quite beautiful but here too one hardly sees a blade of grass.... Large herds of cattle and sheep had been here before us and eaten up the shrubs which are the only plants in these deserts.... The larger part of our crew left us there [Bishop Creek]. That gave us more work to do but we got rid of all the worst ones.... We had a number of shooting episodes among them...a German cook, the best man of them all, being wounded perhaps fatally, so that he had to be left behind." *

Although Dodge City and Tombstone get most of the press, the mining camps of Inyo County; Darwin and Cerro Gordo, and adjacent Mono County; Aurora and Bodie, were arguably the most violent settlements on the western frontier in the 1860s and '70s (see Rodger D. McGrath's *Gunfighters, Highwaymen & Vigilantes, Violence on the Frontier*, University of California Press, [1984] for the best account of the Eastern Sierra during that era).

Oliver Roberts de LaFontaine (aka: Oliver Roberts), a Wells Fargo shotgun messenger in the 1870s, told about a shootout in Darwin in southern Inyo County:

"I secured a rifle from the furnace room and went over in front of the slag dump. I had only fired a few shots when a shot tore up my sleeve, on the underside of my elbow . . . I could not shoot with it, so used my left hand and arm.
The balls were now coming across the wash pretty fast, and I could hear them striking the slag-dump behind me and make the slag ring like broken glass.

I made up my mind that this was no place for me to stand . . . I moved a few paces to the front, and as I did so was hit in the right side, over the hip, in the fleshy part of the body with another ball. This knocked me to the ground, and one of my pards came to me, saying, 'Are you done for, old son?'

I said, 'No, I am all right. I will be with you in a few minutes . . .' I knew that I was not fatally wounded . . .

For a time we fired so fast that the people in the lower part of town moved out of their houses to get out of the range of our shots. All of this time, the women and children kept up their cries through the streets asking if their husbands and fathers had been killed."

Of the cemetery in Darwin, Roberts wrote: "I think, if memory serves me right, that there were one hundred twenty-four men buried there and out of that number only two died a natural death. The other one hundred and twenty-two were either stabbed or shot, so the reader can see that Darwin was a hot town while it lasted." **

Samuel Bishop and his family returned to Fort Tejón a few short years after settling in the Owens Valley, but the small settlement which had become established in the area continued to grow. In 1864 a stagecoach line was established along the cattle trail between Bishop Creek and Aurora. This route, now known as Fish Slough Road, can be followed by automobile today. All of this activity by the white settlers created a problem for the native inhabitants.

The Owens Valley Paiute had no comprehension of the ownership of animals, they saw cattle as wild game.After some of the Indians butchered a few head of livestock, one white rancher retaliated by killing a Paiute warrior. As in most other areas on the American frontier, this event led to a small war between the white settlers and the Indians.

For a time, the Paiute warriors bested the settlers in battle and many whites fled the area until the 2nd Cavalry California Volunteers arrived on July 4, 1862 and established Fort Independence, about 40 miles to the south of Bishop Creek. However, due to the Civil War raging in the east, the cavalry was undermanned and skirmishes between whites and Indians continued until about 1865.

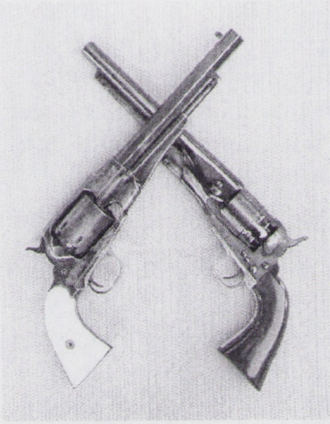
A monument to one of these battles known as “The Battle of the Ditch” or "The Battle of Bishop Creek," where nearly 500 Indians, some armed with muzzle loading rifles, fought a group of citizen militia from Bishop Creek and Aurora on April 6, 1862, can be seen about five miles west of town at the intersection of old Bishop Creek Road and State Highway 168 (take Line Street west about five miles from the center of town, the monument is 1/2 mile west of the new Bishop campus of Cerro Coso College).

Camped on the outskirts of Bishop Creek in July of 1871, Daniel Bruhn had this to say about the Owens Valley Paiute: "At this moment we are among a tribe of Indians who call themselves Piutes [old style spelling]. A little fort holds them under control. They have been quite peaceful, in the whole, since 1865.... They usually come to our camps and seat themselves around us without saying a word. If we invite them to our meals, they eat with great appetite and they are very delighted with tobacco, but I have never heard them beg for anything. They have no permanent dwelling, but like ourselves sleep under the open skies in their blankets and at this time of the year live off fish and mussels, which they dive for with great skill. Nearly everyone of them owns a good riding horse. If not, one may see two or three men on one. The women are generally obliged to walk, carrying the smallest children in a kind of basket on their backs and leading larger ones by the hand." *

An 1880s advertisement for a Bishop Creek harness and saddle shop.

(Mike Cheuvront collection)

After the end of hostilities and with the gold and silver mines played out in Aurora, the settlement of Bishop Creek flourished as the main supplier of beef and mutton to the latest boomtown in the Eastern Sierra, Bodie, just across the border from Aurora. Bodie—the wildest of them all, with more "Old West" style shootouts than any other town on the frontier—claimed nearly 10,000 citizens in1880. In contrast, Bishop Creek had a mere 275 souls at the time. Today, Bodie is the best preserved ghost town in the west and the Bishop area has over 9,000 residents. By the early 1880s, a railroad was running through the Owens Valley, with connections to Carson City. In 1889 town fathers decided to drop "Creek" from the name and our community became known simply as *Bishop*



Although much tamer than Bodie, Bishop Creek had it's share of frontier violence during that era. On September 17, 1871, twenty-nine convicts broke out of the Nevada State Penitentiary at Carson City. Armed with pistols stolen from prison guards, six of the violent fugitives headed south toward Mono County murdering innocent men along the way. The State of Nevada offered a reward of $500 each, dead or alive, for the convicts and a posse from Aurora gave chase but quit after their horses gave out at Adobe Meadows. From there, a posse under Deputy Sheriff George Hightower of Benton (34 miles north of Bishop) took up the chase. The posse trailed the convicts to Monte Diablo Creek (across Highway 395 from the present day Mammoth-Yosemite Airport) where an intense shootout between the posse and desperados took the lives of Benton Wells Fargo agent Robert Morrison and an Indian named Mono Jim, both members of Hightower's posse. Convict Lake and Creek got their names from this episode. Monte Diablo mountain above the lake was

renamed Mt. Morrison in honor of the Wells Fargo agent who bravely tried to capture the convicts after the other posse members retreated under fire.

After the shoot out, three of the convicts made their way down into Round Valley nine miles north of Bishop Creek where they were captured on September 29th by a local posse and taken to the jail in town. During their two weeks on the run, the convicts killed a total of four men. As the Inyo County Sheriff's posse began their trip to return the convicts to Carson City they were confronted by a party of heavily armed vigilantes from Bishop Creek near what is now the corner of Highway 395 and Brockman lane about two miles northwest of town. The vigilantes, many of them friends of Morrison, took the three convicts from the posse with very little resistance and drove them in a wagon to a small cabin in a meadow about a mile away (near the present day Meadow Creek housing tract in north Bishop) where, after a vote, they hung two of the men from a beam on the outside of the cabin. The third convict was found innocent of murder and returned to Carson City for trial.

Stagecoach in front of the Valley View Hotel in Bishop circa 1880.

(Bishop Area Chamber of Commerce collection)

Another raucous event is immortalized in a new mural on the east wall of the outside of the Bishop Police Department on the corner of West Line and Warren Streets. According to the March 10, 1887 *Inyo Register*, one Philip Staiger was causing a ruckus by drawing his pistol and threatening several people in one of the local saloons. When a Bishop Police officer named Plumley attempted to arrest him, Staiger "presented a gun and told him to stop." Officer Plumley then drew his revolver and fired a shot "by way of a frightener." When that failed to stop the belligerent Staiger, the officer then fired three more warning shots. Staiger continued his abusive behavior as Officer Plumley then took deliberate aim. The shot hit Staiger, the ball furrowing along his neck without seriously injuring him. Plumley then arrested his man on a charge of "resisting an officer." This was one of the last Old West type shootouts in the area just before the frontier closed.

By the turn of the 20th century the area around Bishop became laced with dozens canals and ditches feeding water from Bishop Creek and the Owens River to the many farms that had been established where alfalfa, wheat, corn, and potatoes where grown. On May 6, 1903 the town incorporated officially as the City of Bishop. To this day Bishop is the only incorporated city in Inyo County.

As the Owens Valley moved from primarily grazing land into a more agriculural area in the mid 1800's, there were problems with stock animals damaging crops. But fence materials were hard to find in the arid desert. In order to increase the supply of fencing material, black locust trees and cottonwood trees were introduced into the valley in the late 1860s.

Main Street in Bishop circa 1910

(Bishop Area Chamber of Commerce collection)

Just two years after the city incorporated, agents of the Water Department for the City of Los Angeles (now the L.A. Department of Water and Power) began buying up huge tracts of land in the Owens Valley to obtain water rights for the thirsty metropolis in Southern California under the guise of a local irrigation project. The real goal was to send Owens Valley water south to Los Angeles. By the time the now famous Los Angeles Aqueduct was completed in 1913, it was too late for valley residents to take any action.

The aqueduct, 223 miles long, used no pumping stations just gravity siphons sending water from the Owens Valley to Southern California. The City of Los Angeles receives 70% of its water from the Owens Valley and the Eastern High Sierra. From that point on, Bishop and the other little towns in the valley; Independence, Big Pine and Lone Pine, would have to learn to depend on tourism to survive.

Intersection of Main and Line Streets circa 1957

** Special thanks to Walt Svetich, Bishop resident and former Forest Service packer for the use of excepts from Daniel Bruhn's letters. Svetich's booklet,* ***History of The Montgomery Pass Wild Horse Territory*** *is available at the Bishop Area Chamber of Commerce Visitors Bureau.*

Taken from William W. Walters,* ***The Great Understander, True Life Story of the Last of the Wells Fargo Shotgun Messengers*, privately printed (1931).*

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HISTORY

OWENS VALLEY AND THE CITY OF BISHOP

by Dave Babb

Late in the summer of 1845, John C. Fremont's Third Expedition headed west on the Oregon Trail with a force of about 60 men, including pathfinder, Kit Carson. Along the way, the expedition was joined by Joseph Reddeford Walker and Richard Owens, a close friend of Kit Carson. The company reached Walker Lake, Nevada, on November 23. From Walker Lake, a small group headed north to cross the Sierra along the Salmon Trout River –today called the Truckee. The main party of nearly 50 men, including Walker (who had led earlier expeditions through this region in 1834 and 1843) headed south under the command of Theodore Talbot. They reached the headwaters of the Owens River – today called Deadman Creek – on December 16 and followed the river south through the Valley to Owens Lake, then southerly through Walker's Pass to the San Joaquin Valley.

After the expedition, Fremont named the Owens river, valley, and lake for his most respected lieutenant, Richard Owens, although Owens never saw the region.

HISTORY

By the mid 1850s, news of the mineral wealth of the Eastern Sierra had spread throughout the state. Soon, great herds of cattle were being driven from the southern San Joaquin Valley through Owens Valley to the meat markets of the booming mining towns of Bodie and Aurora, north of Mono Lake. Mining operations were flourishing in Owens Valley as well. During the 1860s, several settlements were established throughout the valley, many of which survived but a few years only to be abandoned when the mines played out.

The first permanent habitation in Owens Valley was a stone cabin built in August of 1861 by Charles Putnam. Situated a short distance south of Little Pine Creek –today called Independence Creek – the building served as a home, trading post, hospital, and "fort" for the settlers, as well as a rest stop for travelers. "Putnam's" later became the town of Independence, the County seat of Inyo County.

On July 3, 1861, as Putnam was preparing to build his cabin, Samuel Addison Bishop (former judge of the regional court at Fort Tejon and supervisor of construction of a military wagon road from Fort Smith, Arkansas to Fort Tejon) dissolved his partnership with General Beale in the cattle business and left Southern California for Owens Valley. Bishop, along with his wife, brother-in-law, three cowboys, and few Indian herders, arrived 51 days later with a herd of more than 600 head of cattle and 50 horses, and settled on the San Francis Ranch, located three miles west of present day Bishop. The creek running through his ranch became known as Bishop Creek.

After living on the San Francis Ranch for only 18 months, Bishop and his family moved south where he participated in the formation of Kern County, becoming one of the first supervisors of that county. In 1864, the present townsite was laid out and was also given the name Bishop Creek.

Those who settled at Bishop Creek in those days faced many hardships, not the least of which was an apparent lack of law and order in this remote region. A citizen of nearby Owensville, a settlement on the east side of Owens River near present-day Laws, concluded that the only moral influence in the region was the presence of a few women. At the request of his father, the Reverend Andrew Clark came to Bishop Creek in October of 1867 and began holding services in an adobe schoolhouse west of town at the present site of Northern Inyo Hospital. On January 1, 1869, Clark organized the Bishop Missionary Baptist Church; consisting of Clark and six members. For the first few years, the existence of the church led residents of other settlements in the Valley to give Bishop Creek the uncomplimentary nickname -- "Gospel Swamp."

During the 1870s, the first game fish (brown trout, rainbow trout, and catfish) were planted in Eastern Sierra streams, trees were planted by the thousands, farms and orchards were established and watered by means of large canals diverting water from the Owens River onto the sagebrush covered lands, and Bishop Creek became the population center of Inyo County.

By the end of the decade of the 1880s, some 10,000 acres of farmland had been cultivated, water was flowing through 250 miles of canals and irrigation ditches, the Carson and Colorado Railroad had established a narrow gage line into the Valley from Nevada, and citizens of Bishop Creek voted to shorten the name of the town to Bishop.

At the turn of the century, Bishop boasted of nearly 40 businesses and over 500 citizens living within the town boundaries. In April of 1903, the City of Bishop was incorporated as a sixth-class municipality. The first decade of the 20th Century brought rapid growth to the city of Bishop and the census of 1910 recorded 1,190 persons. In 1912, both the Bishop Volunteer Fire Department and the Bishop Chamber of Commerce were organized. Groundwork was laid to establish a sound economy based on tourism in April of 1913 when the Ex-California Governor Gillette visited the area and announced, "I look for the day not too far hence when Inyo will be the great attraction for tourists the world over, even as Switzerland is now such an attraction. Open the arteries of easy entrance to this magnificent domain of the Sierras, and an eager throng will hasten to share with you the bounties that nature has so lavishly bestowed upon you."

Echoing this prediction, nationally known writer, C.L. "Outdoor" Franklin, told the Chamber of Commerce on March 4, 1925, "Bishop is absolutely the finest resort out west of the Rocky Mountains. Your crop of the future is not alfalfa or fruit, but tourists."

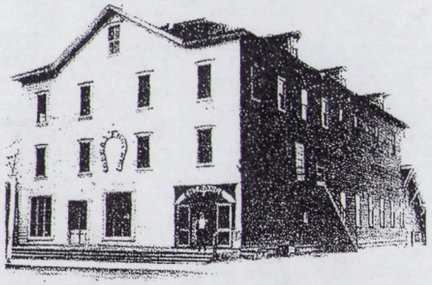
Today, Bishop and the Owens Valley are indeed the gateway to one of the finest vacation and recreation areas in the nation. The Inyo National Forest is the most visited of all our National Forests, both in summer and winter. The fact that some 90 percent of the land in the Eastern Sierra is administered by the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and the City of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, assures that the rural, open-space nature of the region will be maintained and protected, and will always remain open to the public.

1980s to what it is today when the Bank of Mammoth started its Bishop branch. This location now is occupied by Monument National Bank.

Opera House 13

156 East Line Street

One of the worst fires in the history of Bishop was the burning of the three-story Opera House owned by Harry Holland. This happened on the evening of January 6, 1924. The upper floor was used by lodges and fraternities for meetings. There were offices and rooms on the sec-



ond floor and the first floor served as a theatre, ballroom, basketball court and banquet hall. On the day it burned, a basketball team had been using it and a women's group had been practicing on the upper floor. There was never any proof established as to the cause of the fire. The current picture running at the time of the fire was "My American Wife" featuring Gloria Swanson. When the alarm was sounded a great column of smoke and flame was already leaping from the roof. The volunteer firemen worked valiantly, but the fire was so hot it was impossible to get close enough to stop it. Although it was evening, the sky was so bright from the glow of the fire that the cock pheasants were crowing, thinking it was breaking day. In 1925, with donations from the Masons, the present concrete building was erected. Two doors to the east (168 East Line) is the John Black Residence. Today it is still occupied and is reputed to be the second-oldest residence remaining in Bishop (please do not disturb occupants).

Bargain Store 14

312 North Main Street

In the 1890s, John (Dutch John) Alberts owned the corner of North Main and Willow Streets. Originally "Dutch John" established a blacksmith shop. Later the property was sold to Dr. George, who had been a major in the civil war, and he founded his medical practice with his residence in the back. Dr. George practiced medicine here until his death in May of 1900. Mr. and Mrs. F.M. Baldwin came to Bishop and started the "Golden Rule Store" in Dr. George's building. The business flourished and the building enlarged. It was then called the "Baldwin Bargain Store." Later it became the J.C. Penney store. In the 1940s it was remodeled, became a Rosco's Five and Dime, and finally, Sierra Office Supply.

The "Little Brown House" 15

Corner of Willow and Rose Streets

This house, behind Sierra Office Supply was built in the late 1800s.

Lady Bug 16

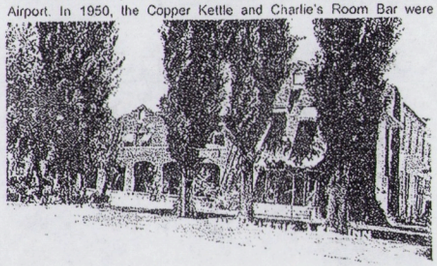
462 Rose Street

The Lady Bug Art Gallery house was built in 1890. At that time the house was owned by Jasper Williams. One hundred five years later, the house again is owned by a Williams, no relation. The house still sits on its original foundation of tufa rock, native to the Mono Lake area. The original tax bill dates back to December 29, 1890. The total amount due was $18.02. You can still see the tax bill displayed in the gallery, but watch out—the house comes with its own ghost, "Nellie".

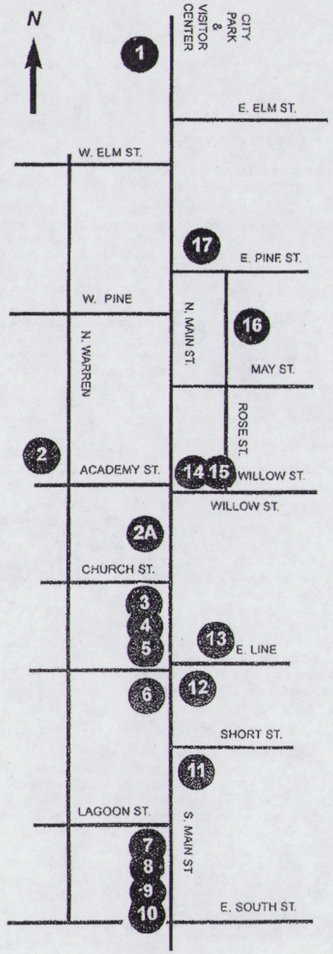
Kittie Lee Hotel 17

524 North Main Street

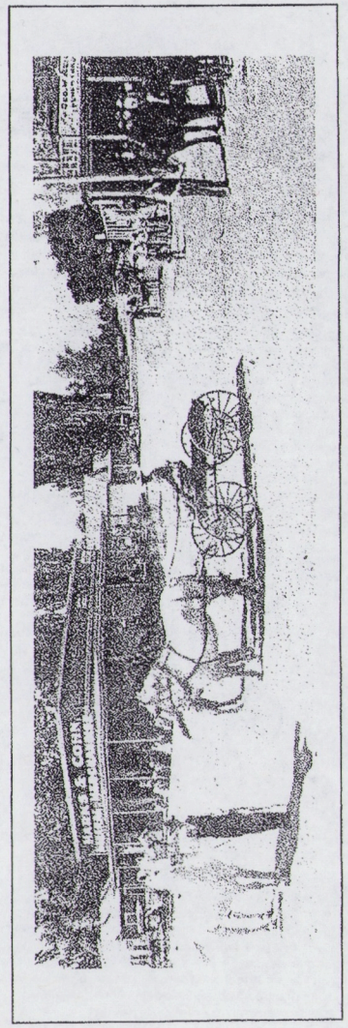
In August, 1924, southerner Matt Wilkenson opened the Kittie Lee Inn, named for his daughter "Kittie Lee". William E. Whorff purchased the Inn in 1925 and the Kittie Lee was "The" place to stay for Hollywood's finest. During World War II the dining room became barracks for the Army Air Force pilots who were training at the Bishop Airport. In 1950, the Copper Kettle and Charlie's Room Bar were



opened. In 1965, the Inn was torn down, but Charlie's Room and Copper Kettle continued to operate. In 1975 the building was sold to Sam Walker, who reconstructed it to what it is today as the Whiskey Creek Restaurant. The Sugar and Spice Room, with a welcoming used-brick fireplace remains to this day inside of the restaurant. A special note of interest: the large Ohio Buckeye tree standing proudly in the midst of the deck in front of Whiskey Creek was given as a gift from an Ohio couple at the completion of construction in 1924. It still produces "buckeyes" in the fall and has survived the many remodelings through the years.



NOT TO SCALE
SOME STREETS OMITTED



A WALKING TOUR OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS IN DOUNTOUN BISHOP

OUR STORIES

Bishop was named after Samuel A. Bishop on August 22, 1861. Bishop, his wife, three white men and several herders, driving 500 to 600 head of cattle and 50 horses arrived in Owen's Valley and established a camp. Bishop named the camp San Francis Ranch and built 2 small cabins on the site located along the local creek three miles southwest of the present townsite. Bishop resided in the valley only a brief 18 months, but his name was given to the stream and later to the town.

The true "Founding Father" of the City of Bishop was the Reverend Andrew Clark, an ordained Baptist minister, who arrived in the Owen's Valley on October 3, 1867, along with his wife Rachel and their four children. They settled at Owensville, as Laws was then called, near his parents, Thomas and Barbara Clark, who had located in the Owen's Valley about 1863. Andrew answered the request of his father "for a minister to be sent that would be brave enough to endure the hardships." After inquiring of his fellow clergy and finding no one interested, he accepted the call himself. For the next several years Andrew was known as a "Circuit Rider", traveling on horseback from the top of Sherwin Grade to the Cerro Gordo Mine near the Owen's Lake.

Andrew Clark's two brothers, Milton and William, came to the Owen's Valley in 1865 and each homesteaded 240 acres of land which now comprise most of the City of Bishop, north of Line Street. The first land patents in the Bishop township were listed to John Clarke, Dorcus Clark (widow of William), Thomas Clark, Milton S. Clark and Minerva Powers, all in 1874 or later (Clarke and Clark - no relation).

Andrew was the only member in the family not to homestead. Instead he purchased 40 acres from his brother William's widow for $500.

In 1876 Andrew Clark gave the trustees of the Bishop Creek School the first property for a token fee of one dollar. Over the next 40 years Andrew bought, sold and traded land for businesses and residences within the Bishop Townsite.

William Chalfant in "The Story Of Inyo" says "Bishop property, long unsurveyed, was bought and sold by measured metes and bounds for years; with such impermanent starting points as 'a willow tree', 'the center of the ditch', etc., to make trouble later when exact boundaries became important". This probably explains why the City of Bishop has only two intersections that align across Main Street (one at Yaney Street and one at South Street)! All other streets begin at Main Street and run east or west with no corresponding cross street. Folk tales say this was to provide a barrier to stop runaway horse teams.

In his notes on downtown Bishop, Gus Cashbaugh says, "In the early days there were irrigation ditches and streams crossing Main Street. For drinking water 20 foot by 2 inch diameter galvanized pipe that has a point and several holes in the end of the pipe, was driven into the ground. There was always good drinking water at the 14 to 18 foot depth. A pitcher pump was used. Some of the water had iron but mostly it was clear, cool water. The pump that was used the most was located in front of the stores at 115 and 125 North Main Street. Every person used the old tin cup."

At the turn of the century the people of Bishop were straining to be born into an incorporated city. One of the chief purposes in view was the creation of a better water supply for domestic use and fire protection. A census determined that the required 500 persons within the set boundaries was exceeded by 40 persons, so an election was held and incorporation was voted 63 to 36 on April 24, 1903. Bonds of $44,000 were voted for construction of water and sewer systems on September 6, 1904.

Thanks

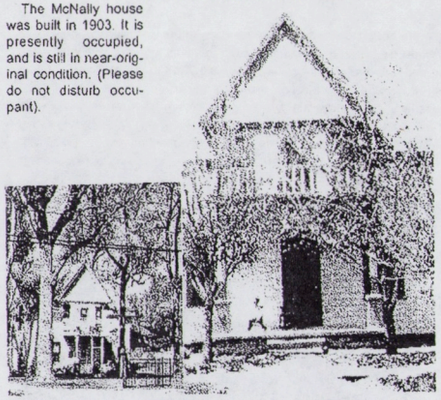
We hope you will enjoy this tour! As we obtain more pictures and historical information, we will update this with further stops along the tour. Our undying thanks to everybody who so generously shared stories and photos. Special thanks to the staff at Laws Railroad museum who so graciously opened their archives to us.

Barbel Williams, Kathy Henderson, Tina Cocherell
Vivian Patterson, Shirley Fendon

McNally House 1

779 North Main Street

The McNally house was built in 1903. It is presently occupied, and is still in near-original condition. (Please do not disturb occupant).



Chalfant House 2

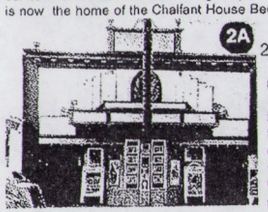
213 Academy Avenue

The Bishop Creek Times was born in October 1881, under the guidance of E. H. Fortecilla and R.C. Julian. For economic reasons it was printed in a building that also housed a saloon, but its obituary was written in

June 1882, cause of death being "we are out of paper and have not the money to buy more." The Inyo Register at Bishop was established by P.A. Chalfant and son Willie Arthur Chalfant in April 1885. W.A. Chalfant became an historian and editor, whose research and writings of local history are found in his books "The Story of Inyo", "Outposts of Civilization", "Death Valley, the Facts", and "Tales of the Pioneers". He was a charter member of the Bishop Rotary Club and held 100% attendance until his death in 1943. Originally the Bishop Rooming House, it is now the home of the Chalfant House Bed and Breakfast.

Bishop Theatre 2A

237 North Main Street



Harry Holland built the Bishop Theatre in the 1920s after the Opera House (see number 13) burned. It had a large stage complete with rich red velvet curtains. The community used it for various local performances.

Bishop Bakery 3

125 North Main Street

In the Black Building (see number 5) was the Vienna Bakery managed by Ed and Lulu Mckeen until the 1920s. Bob Schoch arrived from Germany, married Louisa Bulpitt and purchased the bakery in 1922. He renamed it the Bishop Bakery and moved it to this location. The Schochs originated the sheepherder bread and later sold the bakery to the now world-renowned Schat family. The building still has (but not used) the original electrical systems (the first—bare wire on ceramic insulators and wooden posts, the second—cloth-wrapped cable). The current system is modern and up-to-code. The adjoining buildings and this one share common side walls, agreements dating from 1926.

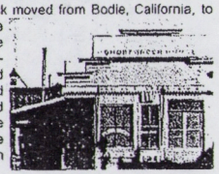
Saloon and Barber Shop 4

115 North Main Street

North of Black Corner was the Murphy Saloon and Jake Koch's Barber Shop. At the turn of the century, the most popular water pump was located on the street in front of the store where you could find an old pitcher pump and a tin cup. In the 1920s, the family of Jake Koch started a western clothing store and named it "The Toggery". In the 1940s The Toggery was sold to M.D. & Louise Alexander. The store is still owned by the Estate of Louise Alexander Sessums.

Black's Corner 5

Northwest Corner of Main and Line Streets



In 1891, Mr. and Mrs. Jack Black moved from Bodie, California, to Bishop. Mr. Black purchased the property from Mr. Phillipsy. At the time, there were several small businesses renting space: a pool and billiard parlour, a confectionery and tobacco shop, and a grocery and meat market. In 1920 the concrete walls were constructed. In 1972 the frontage walls were refaced with brick.

Marks & Cohen, General Merchandise 6

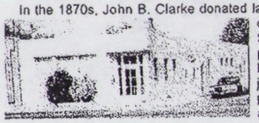
Southwest Corner of Main and Line Streets

(See cover picture, taken 1900, looking west toward Mt. Tom)

Today a car rental lot and a glass house occupy part of this property and a portion of Rich's Britches may be a part of the original building.

The Jail 7

307 South Main Street



In the 1870s, John B. Clarke donated land on the southwest corner of Lagoon and South Main Streets to build a jail. As the population increased, the building was enlarged. The jail is made of poured-in-place concrete. It extends along Lagoon Street about ninty feet and about thirty feet along Main Street. It housed the Justice Court, City Police, Inyo County Sheriff and jail cells. South of the jail was China Town.

Chinese Village 8

(Now Perry Motors' used car lot)

The street through it was narrow and crooked. It extended through to the west one block and south to the canal at South Street. It was a very swampy area filled with cattails and weeds. Many of the shacks were on stilts 2' to 3' in the air because the area filled with water when it rained. The Chinese dressed in the traditional attire of black clothing and long hair. China Town was abandoned in 1911.

Old Inyo Lumber Property 9

351 South Main Street

Now the site of Dominos Pizza and Hi-Mountain Rentals. Arthur Hess bought a large lot and started the early Inyo Lumber Company.

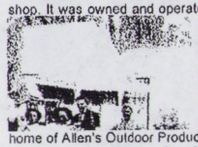
Blacksmith Shop 10

315 South Main Street

Elbridge Hartshorn, born in Bishop in 1889, was a blacksmith for many years. After he died, his sons, William and Finley, operated the business as a hardware and welding shop. The wheels of the Borax Twenty Mule Team wagon were made by Elbridge Hartshorn. The wagon was used for years to transport borax from Death Valley. William Hartshorn is still a resident of Bishop. The ownership of the building remained in the Hartshorn family until 1985, a span of 96 years.

Butcher Shop 11

200 South Main Street



On the corner of South Main and Short Streets was the first butcher shop. It was owned and operated by Sol Foorman. The butcher shop was in the front of the building and the family residence in the rear. In 1972 the old frame building was remodeled and a new exterior provided. The building has been the home of many businesses: flower shop, bike shop, crafts and jewelry, real estate, and is now the home of Allen's Outdoor Products and Rainbow Pack Station.

Bank Building 12

106 South Main Street

John B. Clarke gave this corner to Seth Sneden, an attorney, in the 1860s, so that he could start the town of Bishop Creek. Sneden built the first store on this site and was the first postmaster. Although the banking industry was first introduced to Inyo County in 1903, there have been a number of banks doing business at this location, starting with the First National Bank of Bishop, then United Security Bank and Trust Company. For over thirty years a Bank of America Branch was located here. This building was remodeled in the

"The Other Side of California... the Eastern Sierra"

Bishop is located at the northern end of Inyo County in the beautiful Owens Valley where Highway 395 meets U.S. Route 6.

While Bishop has the largest population and is the only incorporated city in Inyo County, it definitely maintains a **friendly home-town atmosphere.**

Photo Courtesy of John Loo

Approximately 11,000 people reside in the greater Bishop area. Bishop is a small town with very modern amenities including I-Main (free Wi-Fi downtown and in the City Park). The recently completed Digital 395 broadband project delivers 150 Gigabit fiber optic, middle mile/backhaul capacity to the region.

Bishop is a terrific place to call "home" while exploring the Eastern Sierra. Lodging establishments abound, with about 850 rooms ranging from quite luxurious to rustic cabins. Campgrounds operated by USFS, BLM, Inyo County and private owners are also abundant in the area.

In Bishop, you'll find great restaurants to suit any taste, including American Fare, Mexican Cuisine, plus Chinese, Japanese and Thai delicacies.

Photo Courtesy of Lance Wagoner

Highway 395 is Bishop's Main Street, featuring several art galleries and unique retail shops.

To thoroughly enjoy Bishop, you really must take a side trip off Main Street. Try Line Street (aka Highway 168). To the East on Line Street, you'll cross the Owens River and to the West, you'll find the glorious mountains, lakes and streams of Bishop Creek Canyon. In the summer months, Lake Sabrina, South Lake and North Lake offer world-class trout fishing. In the fall, the Aspens and Cottonwoods turn fiery colors of yellow, orange and red. Photography buffs from around the world visit the canyon in hopes of capturing just a shot or two of the splendor.

Pleasant Valley Reservoir, the Owens River and Buckley Ponds offer **fantastic year-round fishing!**

In the center of town, be sure to visit the Bishop City Park with several acres of beautifully maintained grass, shade trees, flowers and a picture perfect duck pond – a great place to picnic!

The **Bishop Country Club** is a challenging 18-hole course with breathtaking views, plus full service pro shop, restaurant & bar.

If you're feeling lucky, be sure to visit the **Paiute Palace Casino**, just a few miles north-west of downtown on Highway 395.

Other Bishop "must sees" include **Laws Railroad Museum & Historical Site, Downtown Murals, Paiute-Shoshone Cultural Center, Keough's Hot Springs,** and the **Buttermilks**.

The Bishop Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Bureau is conveniently located at the City Park. The visitor center is open daily with friendly and knowledgeable staff.

Whether you are in the area for just an hour, a day or a week, be sure to stop in for free maps & brochures to help you make the most of your Eastern Sierra adventure.

Visit online at **www.bishopvisitor.com** or call toll free 1-888-395-3952.

"Small Town with a BIG Backyard"

Bishop

Searching for art

Bishop's murals reveal glimpses of the past

By Kristina Blüm

Mural hunting is a wonderful way to explore Bishop, either on foot or by driving. Pick up a Bishop Mural Society brochure at the Bishop Area Chamber of Commerce Visitors Center in the City Park, across the street from Erick Schat's Bakkery. Test your local knowledge for extra Treasure Hunter Points.

1 The Slim Princess
Located at Fendon's Furniture. Laws Railroad Museum and Historic Village was once a thriving train depot. This mural depicts Laws as it once was.

2 Trompe L'Oeil Mural
This mural was painted to fool the eye by matching the windows, awnings and siding of the adjacent building. The painting honors the Bishop Mural society founder David Williams. This mural is located at 462 Rose St. near Studio 27.

3 Kittie Lee Inn
Located on the south wall of Whiskey Creek, corner of Main and Pine streets.
Whiskey Creek is a local landmark, but before Whiskey Creek, the location was home to the Kitty Lee Inn. Built in 1924, the inn was considered the height of luxury. Be sure to read the E Clampus Vitus memorial plaque located at the corner for the full history of the Kitty Lee Inn.

4 The Ernest Kimmey Teamster Family Mural
Using a triptych technique with three panels in one mural, this painting depicts a twenty-two mule and horse team going over Sand Canyon to one of the power plants on Bishop Creek. The mural is located on the north facing wall of Union Bank on Main Street.

5 Bishop Bakery, 1922
This mural honors the Basque tradition of shepherding in the Owens Valley. Bob and Louisa Schoch, owners of the Bishop Bakery, baked sheepherder bread in brick ovens. The original bread could last several weeks without spoiling. This mural is located on Main Street, above the front entrance to Bishop Art Supply, just north of the Main and Line Street intersection.
Treasure Hunter Points: Visit Erick Schat's Bakkery to try some Sheepherder bread.

Treasure Hunter quiz

1. What was mined at the Pine Creek Mine, and what was it used for?
2. What year was the first Los Angeles Aqueduct completed?
3. What was the original name of the restaurant before it was called Whiskey Creek?
4. Which long-time local doctor is depicted in one of the scenes in the mural located across from the Bishop Post Office?
5. Why was the Carson Colorado called the Slim Princess?
6. What was Father Crowley's nickname? What local landmarks have been named after him?
7. What do the four "Hs" in 4-H stand for?
8. Can you tell the difference between a horse and a mule?

See answers on page 19.

6 Young at Heart
This small painting, meant to depict the sedimentary layers of earth beneath Bishop, features some aspects of the region's history. The dog, Hunter, helps ground this mural in the present. The painting is located at the Inyo County District Attorney's Office on Line Street.
Treasure Hunter Points: Can you find the Bristlecone Pine roots? Paiute arrowheads? Keys? How about the mammoth tusks?

7 Drain
In this controversial mural, the artist graphically depicted the draining of water from the Owens Valley. This mural is located on the eastern wall of the Window Fair on W. Line Street, at the Line and Fowler intersection.

8 The History of Medicine at the Local Pharmacy
Five colorful scenes depict local people and traditional medicine made from plants, as well as an old fashioned pharmacy soda fountain. Located at Dwayne's Friendly Pharmacy, across W. Line Street from the Bishop Post Office.

9 A Dangerous Arrest
Appropriately located on the eastern wall of the Bishop Police Department at the corner of W. Line and Warren Street, this scene depicts an old west event that broke the peace and quiet of Bishop in 1887. Treasure Hunter Points: Check out the two E Clampus Vitus monuments located at the corner next to the mural.

10 Father Crowley
Father John Crowley remains a legendary figure in local lore. He was a man of faith who dedicated his life to helping the inhabitants of the Eastern Sierra. He saw tremendous potential in the region, particularity in fishing. Located at 197 N. Main Street on the north wall of Body and Soul in the parking lot next to Joseph's Market.

11 Bishop Mining Mural
This mural-in-a-day captures the history of the abandoned mines around Bishop, including the Champion Sparkplug Mine and the Pine Creek Mine. Located on the north wall of Amigo's Mexican Restaurant on Main Street.

12 Celebrating the Sierra
Ceramic tile and mosaic depict 237 different species of Eastern Sierra plants and animals. Each tile was hand sculpted and painted by one of 110 community members. The mural was dedicated to the volunteers of Inyo County Search and Rescue. Located on the east wall of the Bishop Library at the corner of Warren Street and Academy Avenue.
Treasure Hunter Points: How many animals can you identify?

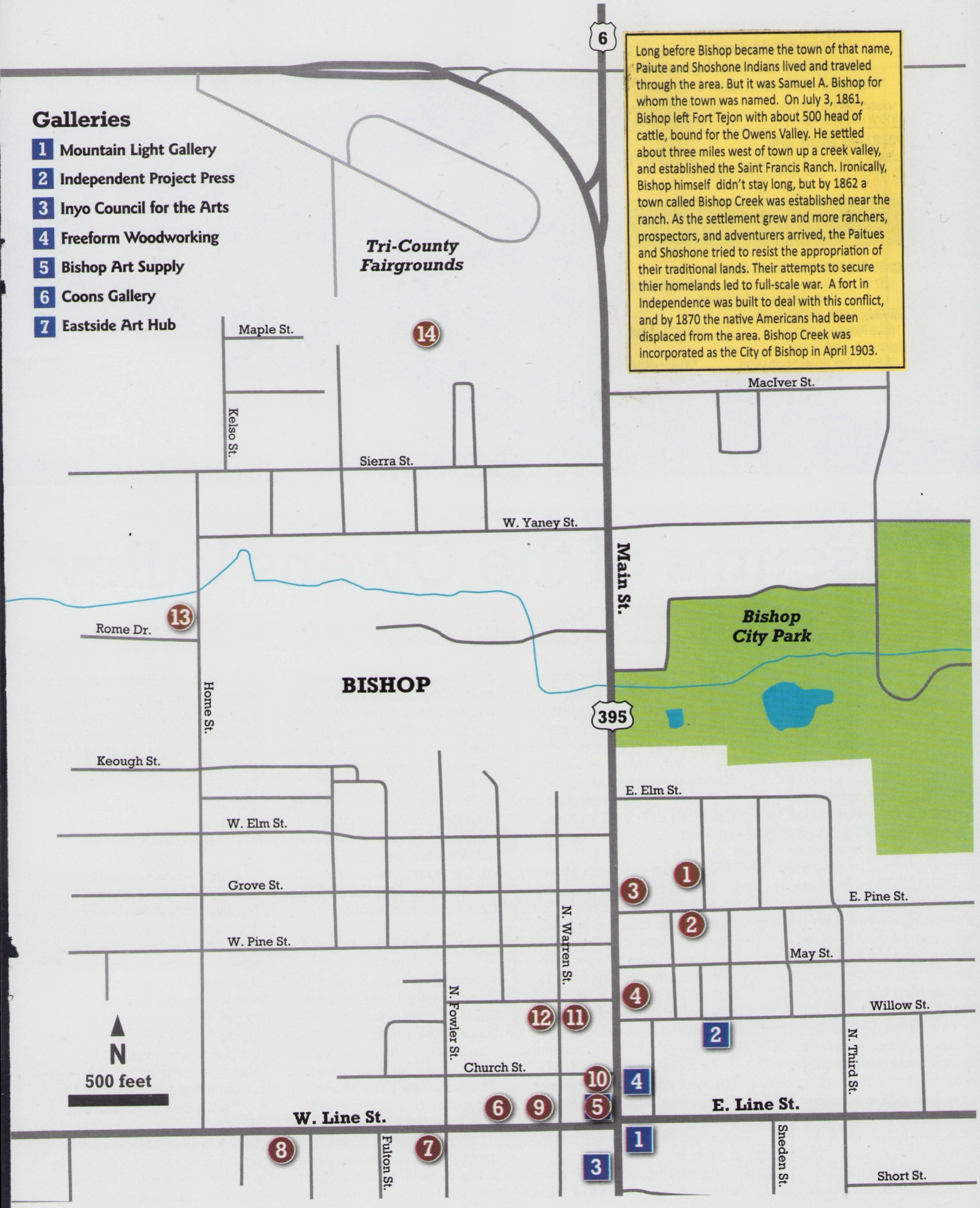
13 The Sunland Orchard Circa 1912
Early settlers used the Owens River to irrigate fields and orchards in the remote valley and created, for a short time, one of the most productive agricultural areas in California. This mural is located inside Bishop Nursery, 789 Home Street.
Treasure Hunter Points: Be sure to wander around the nursery grounds. The large trees in the back are home to many non-migratory birds, including some raptors.

14 4-H Quilt
This colorful mural honors over 100 years of 4-H children and their projects. It is painted on the front of the Douglas Robinson building at the Tri-County Fairgrounds, where the 4-H children display their projects each year during the Tri-County Fair each Labor Day Weekend.

Galleries

1. Mountain Light Gallery
2. Independent Project Press
3. Inyo Council for the Arts
4. Freeform Woodworking
5. Bishop Art Supply
6. Coons Gallery
7. Eastside Art Hub

Long before Bishop became the town of that name, Paiute and Shoshone Indians lived and traveled through the area. But it was Samuel A. Bishop for whom the town was named. On July 3, 1861, Bishop left Fort Tejon with about 500 head of cattle, bound for the Owens Valley. He settled about three miles west of town up a creek valley, and established the Saint Francis Ranch. Ironically, Bishop himself didn't stay long, but by 1862 a town called Bishop Creek was established near the ranch. As the settlement grew and more ranchers, prospectors, and adventurers arrived, the Paitues and Shoshone tried to resist the appropriation of their traditional lands. Their attempts to secure thier homelands led to full-scale war. A fort in Independence was built to deal with this conflict, and by 1870 the native Americans had been displaced from the area. Bishop Creek was incorporated as the City of Bishop in April 1903.



File photo

The Carson Colorado Railroad once was graced by engine No. 9, now resting at Laws Railroad Museum and Historic Village.

Museums of the Owens Valley

History and culture of Inyo County come alive

By Kristina Blüm

Laws Railroad Museum and Historic Village

Laws Railroad Museum and Historic Village is an 11-acre property north of Bishop, located at what was once a depot for the Carson and Colorado Railroad.

While the Slim Princess engine No. 9 rests at the heart of the museum, there is far more than just railroad history to explore as several buildings house exhibits showcasing everything from mining history to the daily life of early Eastern Sierra pioneers. There is an operable mill and the museum frequently offers train rides on the historic Death Valley Brill Car.

One exhibit displays the history of the telephone, showing the different improvements in the technology up to modern-day devices. Laws is an archive of historic artifacts and is a perfect spot for a picnic on warm days and is very kid-friendly. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the museum.

From Bishop, drive four miles north on Highway 6. The road will turn east, then north again. At this second turn, there is a sign to the right that leads to the museum.

Laws is open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily during the summer. Hours may change during the winter. Admission is by donation. Call (760) 873-5950 for more information.

The Eastern California Museum

Located in Independence, the Eastern California Museum is home to the largest collection of Paiute Shoshone basketry in the country. There are displays of historic firearms and other artifacts from the region. And just for fun, there is a collection of dozens of different types of bird eggs, including an ostrich egg the size of a cantaloupe.

For those searching for family history or doing research projects, the Eastern California Museum is a good place to start, with access to an extensive archive of historic documents.

For the children, there is an entire network of trails that begins at the museum and lead west of town that are fun to explore. One trail even leads to Dehy Park. There is a little Old West style ghost town on the museum grounds that children will enjoy exploring as well.

The Eastern California Museum is located at 155 N. Grant St. in Independence. Admission is free but donations are greatly appreciated. The museum is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Call (760) 878-0258 for more information.

Paiute-Shoshone Cultural Center

Recently re-opened after a full renovation, the Paiute Shoshone Cultural Center is dedicated to honoring the heritage of the indigenous people of the Owens Valley, the Nuumu (Paiute) and Newe (Shoshone). The museum area showcases the art, culture and living history of the tribes. A memorial hall honors Native American military veterans. There are environmental displays, collections of artifacts and historical archives as well as a native garden and walking trail. A gift shop features locally made Native American gift items and art.

Located at 2300 W. Line Street in Bishop. Call (760) 873-8844 for more information. The Cultural Center is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday.

Manzanar National Historic Site

During World War II, the United States panicked in the face of a possible Japanese invasion. Thousands of Japanese Americans were taken from their homes and taken to relocation camps, one of which was Manzanar in the Owens Valley. In the face of a war, horrific racism, losing their homes and facing the harsh Eastern Sierra climate, the people who were taken to Manzanar managed to take an ugly situation and make the best of it.

There were 11,070 Japanese Americans at Manzanar between 1942 and 1945. Their story is being preserved for future generations by the Manzanar National Historic Site. The museum features a large

BISHOP CREEK CANYON CAMPING

INYO National Forest

ENTRANCE STATION – Located nine miles from Bishop on Highway 168, it is the first place to stop for information on Bishop Creek Canyon. Hours are 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. daily during summer months only. Telephone (619) 873-2527.

ROADS AND PARKING – The road to North Lake is narrow and steep, with few turn-around spots. Large vehicles and trailers are not recommended.

Backpackers can park in the trailhead parking lots or designated overflow areas, but not in campground spurs. Sabrina Basin backpackers should pay special attention to signs giving directions to overnight parking areas. There is no overnight parking at the trailhead.

* PERMITS AND CAMPSITES *

FAMILY CAMPGROUNDS – There are eight fee facilities in this canyon. To camp, select a vacant site, return to the self-service station at the entrance to the campground, and obtain a permit. Return to your unit and attach the permit to the numbered post in front of your site.

Forest Service campgrounds in Bishop Creek Canyon are currently managed by a concessionaire, Inyo Recreation Enterprises. There is a possibility that some of the sites in Bishop Creek Canyon will be put on reservation sometime in the near future. As before, the Group campsite must be reserved. To reach the reservation system call 1-800-280-CAMP. Family campsites not on the reservation system are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Your permit expires at 2:00 p.m. To retain the site for additional nights, renew your permit by 2:00 p.m.

* YOU CAN HELP *

CAMPING – In this area camping is limited to established sites in developed campgrounds. Please be sure your site is in one of these marked campgrounds.

CAMPFIRES – Build campfires only in designated steel fireplaces provided by the Forest Service. Rock fire rings are not permitted. Dead and down wood may be gathered from the ground, but **use of wood from standing dead or live trees and shrubs is prohibited.** You may wish to purchase firewood at a canyon resort.

TRASH DISPOSAL – Trash bins are located close to campground entrances. (North Lake Campground users: No trash bins are available on the North Lake Road, please pack out all trash.) Please do your part to keep campgrounds clean.

CLEANING FISH – Clean fish well away from water sources, including water hydrants and restrooms. Wrap and deposit entrails in trash bin.

NOISE – Sound from radio, TV, and musical instruments must be confined to your campsite. Public address systems and portable speakers may not be used. Please do not run generators more than necessary. Quiet time is 10 p.m. to 6 a.m.

RESTROOMS – Please do not use restrooms for trash disposal, diapers, garbage, sanitary napkins, etc. Take such refuse to the nearest trash bin. Please help keep restrooms clean.

PETS – Pets must be on a 6-foot leash and under physical control at all times, or caged. While hiking on National Forest trails, pets must be on leash or under voice command.

WATER – Remember, hydrants are a water source only. Use a bucket or pan to obtain water for dishwashing, or personal hygiene.

VANDALISM – Please report all observed acts of vandalism **IMMEDIATELY** to the nearest Forest Service officer or campground Host with as much information as possible. We appreciate your time and efforts to help maintain campgrounds.

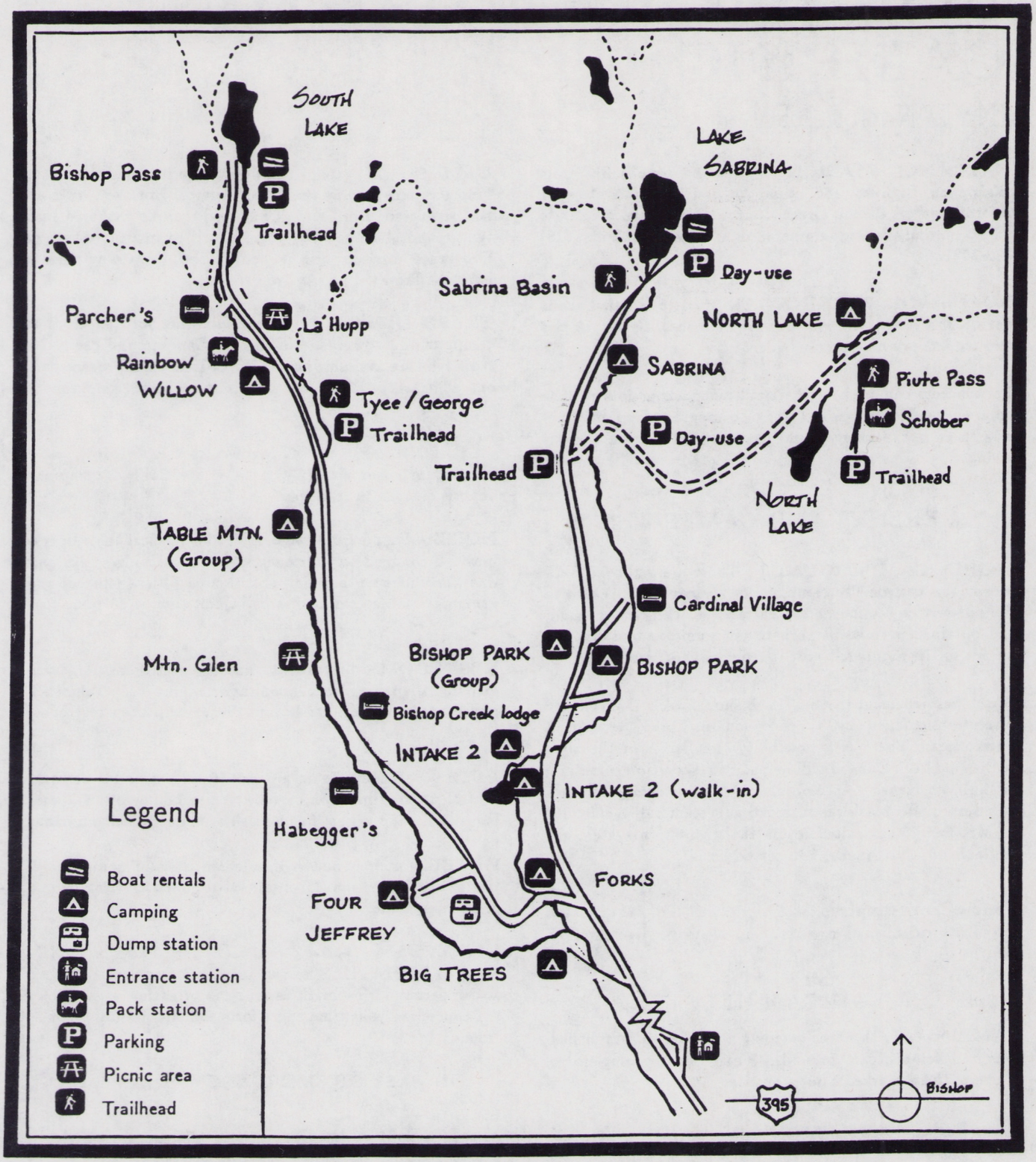
IN CASE OF EMERGENCY - DIAL 911

United States Department of Agriculture

Forest Service

White Mtn. Ranger Station

SERVICES AVAILABLE IN BISHOP CREEK CANYON: Public telephone, restaurant, groceries, beer & wine, ice, firewood, fishing supplies, lodging, propane, boat rentals, backpacker/camper showers.



Persons of any race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, or with any handicapping condition are welcome to use and enjoy all facilities, programs, and services of the USDA. Discrimination in any form is strictly against agency policy, and should be reported to the Secretary of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.

(Rev. 1/92)

LET'S SPEND ANOTHER DAY IN BISHOP

2013

Bishop Chamber of Commerce

The City of Bishop is located at the northern end of Inyo County in the beautiful Owens Valley where Highway 395 meets U.S. Route 6. While Bishop has the largest population and is the only incorporated city in Inyo County, it definitely maintains a friendly home-town atmosphere. Approximately 3,500 people reside within the 1.8 square miles of the city limits and another 5,000 or so live in the greater Bishop Area.

A few years ago, well known author Tom Stienstra surveyed fellow members of the Outdoor Writers Association of California and determined that Bishop is California's #1 City to live for Outdoor Recreation Enthusiasts.

"Bishop was No. 1 on most ballots and in the top 10 of most writers taking the survey," writes Stienstra. "They highlighted trout fishing at lakes and streams, great hiking, horseback riding and exploring near Bishop Pass, backpacking into the John Muir Wilderness, tracking Sierra bighorn sheep and mule deer, and four-season mountain weather, complete with sensational fall colors from aspens, yet without much snow."

"A beautiful small-town atmosphere surrounded by public lands," stated Bill Karr, editor of Western Outdoor News. Columnist and senior research editor Kathie Morgan is quoted as simply remarking, "Breathtaking scenery."

Bishop is a terrific place to call "home" while exploring the Eastern Sierra. Lodging establishments abound, with about 800 rooms ranging from quite luxurious to rustic cabins. Campgrounds operated by USFS, Inyo County and private owners are also abundant in the area. In Bishop, you'll find great restaurants to suit any taste, including American Fare, Mexican Cuisine, plus Chinese, Thai and Japanese delicacies.

Highway 395 is Bishop's Main Street, featuring several art galleries and unique retail shops. To truly enjoy Bishop, you really must take a side trip off Main Street. Try Line Street (aka Highway 168). To the East on Line Street, you'll cross the Owens River and to the West, you'll find the glorious mountains, lakes and streams of Bishop Creek Canyon. In the summer months, Lake Sabrina, South Lake and North Lake offer world-class trout fishing. In the fall, the Aspens and Cottonwoods turn fiery colors of yellow, orange and red. Photography buffs from around the world visit the canyon in hopes of capturing just a shot or two of the splendor.

In the center of town, be sure to visit the Bishop City Park with several acres of beautifully maintained grass, shade trees and flowers – a great place to picnic! The Bishop City Park features a public swimming pool, skate & bike park, tennis courts, baseball fields, and a picture-perfect duck pond.

The Millpond Recreation Area is just a few miles north-west of town and offers camping, baseball fields, playgrounds and much, much more. Pleasant Valley Reservoir and the Lower Owens River offer fantastic year-

Laws Museum

LAWS

Lake Sabrina

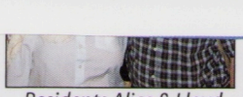
round trout fishing. The Bishop Country Club is a challenging 18-hole course with breathtaking views, plus full service pro shop, restaurant & bar. If you're feeling lucky, be sure to visit the Paiute Palace Casino, just a few miles north-west of downtown on Highway 395.

Other Bishop "must sees" include Laws Railroad Museum & Historical Site, Downtown Murals, Keough's Hot Springs, and the Buttermilks.

Bishop is home to several big annual events including: Blake Jones Trout Derby (March), Mule Days Celebration (May), California High School Rodeo State Finals Championship (June), Eastern Sierra Tri-County Fair (Labor Day), Millpond Music Festival (September), Fall Colors Car Show (October) and more.

The Bishop Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Bureau is conveniently located at the City Park in the A-frame Building-690 North Main Street. The visitor center is open daily, year-round and staffed by friendly & knowledgeable folks. Whether you are in the area for just an hour, a day or a week, be sure to stop in for free maps & brochures to help you make the most of your Eastern Sierra adventure. The visitor center also carries a nice selection of local interest books, postcards, t-shirts, hats & other souvenirs. And, new in 2012, the chamber will offer guided history tours of the Owens Valley on selected dates. Visit online at www.bishopvisitor.com or call 1-760-873-8405.

Owens River



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Bishop Mule Days

Western Mule Magazine

Hard working mules, gorgeous and athletic show mules, driving and freighting mules – not what most people outside the Eastern Sierra would think of when California comes to mind. But every Memorial Day weekend an event takes place in eastern California that showcases the versatility of the mule in a way that brings visitors and competitors from not only the United States, but from nations all across the world.

When most people think of California, the first thing that comes to mind is beaches, Hollywood or Disneyland! Yet nestled on the eastern slope of the massive Sierra Nevada mountain range, on the remote border of the state, lies the deepest valley in North America – the Owens Valley. Home to a land of extremes – the highest point in the contiguous United States (Mt. Whitney at 14,505'), the lowest point in the northern hemisphere (Badwater in Death Valley National Park at 282' below sea level) and the oldest living things (the Bristlecone Pine Forest with trees over 6,000 years old) – the valley has a long history of welcoming mules, not only as an essential tool for settlement and industry, but as a beloved recreational partner.

A parade of history has come through the Owens Valley in the Eastern Sierra. Joseph Walker – explorer, trailblazer and mountain man, led one of the first expeditions through the region in the 1830s. Pack mules were essential to this travel, as they had been in earlier times when thousands of mules came west on the Old Spanish trail into southern California from Santa Fe. (Missourians are well familiar with this trail as its eastern terminus was in St. Louis!). Gold discovery, the Comstock Lode and silver booms all made mules one of the most valuable assets a miner or teamster could have. Whether supplying mining camps near today's Mammoth Lakes or freighting timber and essential mining supplies into such places as Bodie, Aurora and Candalaria. Mules worked in the mineshafts in these places as well. Just a short ways south, California's largest silver boom in a little place known as Cerro Gordo began in 1870. This led to the creation of the Cerro Gordo Freighting Line where the industrious French Canadian Remi Nadeau achieved fame and fortune with his mule freighting teams hauling ore from Cerro Gordo and ultimately to the port of San Pedro or Los Angeles. At one time he had over 2,000 mules hauling silver ore wagons. Of course, many know of the famous Borax 20 mule teams of a later era – mostly due to the promotional efforts of the Borax company.

Some of the greatest engineering feats of the west were either done exclusively with mule power or could not have been imagined without the support of mules. The 240-mile all-gravity Los Angeles Aqueduct (completed in 1913) was only successfully built (and on time!) because of the massive number of mules used for hauling machinery, grading roadways, freighting pipeline and heavy equipment, hauling water, dredging the canals and even packing supplies to the remote workers' camps. Many of the early surveys of the Sierra and White Mountain ranges were done with mules – hauling cartography equipment and supplies to remote high altitude locations that often had little more than game trails for access.

But what we most celebrate here is the tourism industry that sought to provide recreational opportunity to adventurous Californians and Americans as early as the 1880s. The spirit of adventure was alive and well in the late 19th century and continues to this day. Exploration of high mountain meadows, places to plant and later fish for wily mountain trout, glaciers, rivers and canyons, passes and peaks well over 14,000' drew in families and hardy vacationers seeking to stretch their imaginations and pursue idyllic lands away from the growing crowds of cities. Industrious stockmen saw an opportunity and the Sierra packing industry was born, unique in that most pack stations in the Sierra were not born of the need to take hunters to remote locations, but simply to provide comfortable access to magnificent wilderness areas.

Many decades later, the modern version of these businessmen gathered together to meet in the spring of 1969 at the home of Wilfred Partridge, an Owens Valley native from a pioneer ranching family and former owner of Glacier Pack Train in Big Pine Canyon, beneath the Palisade Glacier. The packers and businessmen gathered that day formatted an idea – an event to showcase the mules which were the cornerstone of their businesses. The idea for the Mule Days Celebration was born.

The previous winter had been one of the heaviest snowfalls on record, blocking many trails until late summer, and the communities of the Eastern Sierra, including Bishop, were suffering from the lack of tourism. The idea of an event about the mule, proving that "Anything a horse can do a mule can do better" seemed the perfect idea to kick off the summer season and bring tourists to the area.

The following year, on Memorial Day weekend 1970, the first Mule Day event occurred. With a parade, a few show classes and packing events, it was a success, and plans were put in place to

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do it again the following year. And so began the event that is now in its 47th year!

Over the years the Mule Days committee has worked to keep the competition active and fun, bringing contestants from all over the world, yet still providing a show that thousands of spectators come to see. The parade – given the title by the Guinness Book of World Records as the "Longest Non-Motorized Parade in the World" – has brought upwards of 30,000 spectators to this small town of just over 4,000 residents. The parade has drawn a few of California's governors including Ronald Reagan in 1974. Gorgeous saddle mules and beautifully matched pack strings parade down Main Street on Saturday morning. Stunning 4, 6 or 8-up hitches are not unusual, nor is the magnificent Borax 20 Mule Team.

Special events have included everything from a 50-mule pack string to building a house in the arena with everything for the job packed in on mules. A special "School Days" event promotes Mule Days, and the youth who participate, to area elementary school kids. This year look for a special military tribute honoring the men and women who serve or have served our country.

Today, the Mule Days Celebration begins with show classes on Tuesday and lasts through Sunday evening with the final event: the "packoff" to determine the World Champion Pack Team! The 6-day event is organized and produced by a team of over 700 volunteers and 3 paid staff.

The versatility of the mules that come to Bishop is magnificent. Dressage – western, English and cowboy; jumping and hunter hack classes; driving for singles, doubles and special hitches; pulling and log skidding contests; western, English and halter; gymkhana events; fun and comedy classes; straightaway, chariot and wagon races; trail and ranch versatility; roping, reining and cutting; youth, amateur, professional and collegiate packing competitions; and of course, an extensive donkey division!

Ever looking to the future, packers and committee members developed the successful "I Want to Be a Packer" program. Designed with a specific purpose: to introduce young kids to the wonders of mules, Mule Days and the out-of-doors. With multiple levels of involvement kids are encouraged to participate in stick mule dances to packing workshops. The collegiate packing program uses a unique method of mentorship providing professional packers to assist college and high school youth to compete by training and providing mules. In turn, the collegiate participants help with the youth workshops, where kids learn to work around their assigned mule, pack and later compete in the main arena – much to the delight of the crowds! Parents and grandparents are encouraged to send their kids, then come watch the show!

And so it comes full circle – the packers who envisioned this spectacular event are assisting to mentor and train the next generation of mule fans, ensuring that the spirit of adventure and exploration, powered by mules, continues into the high country for another generation. After all, "Anything a horse can do, a mule can do better" – including travelling the mountain trails of the beautiful Sierra Nevada mountains that stand as sentinels over the small town that hosts the "biggest mule show on earth"!

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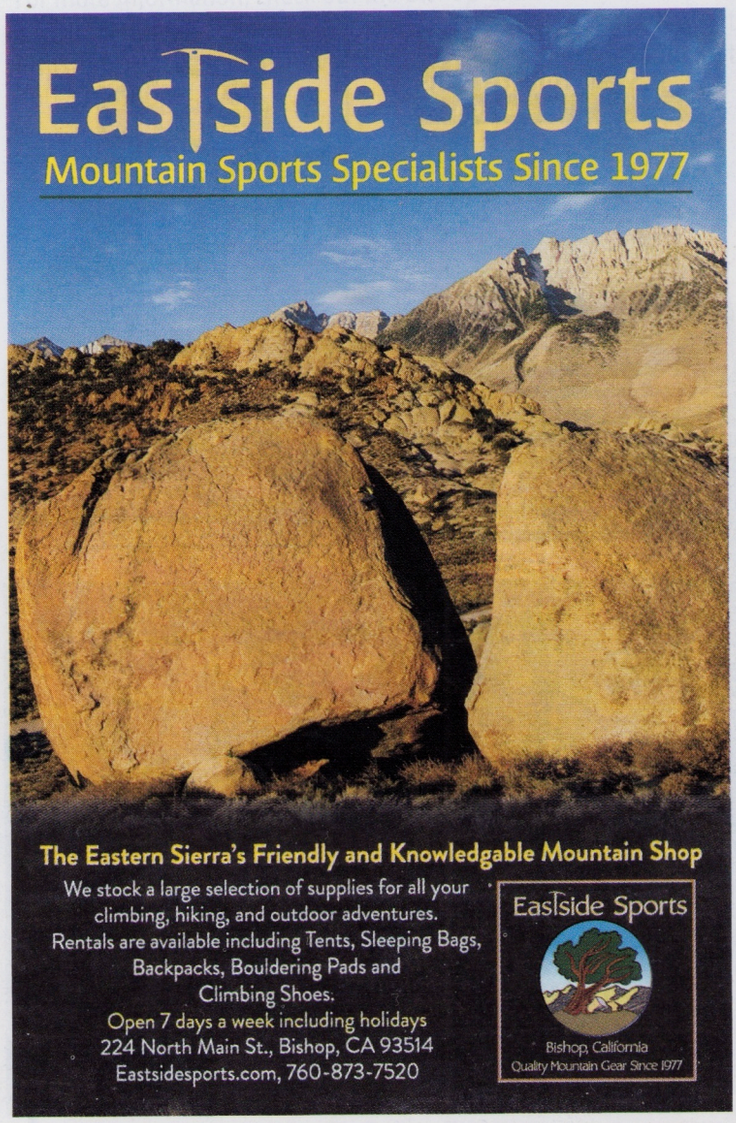
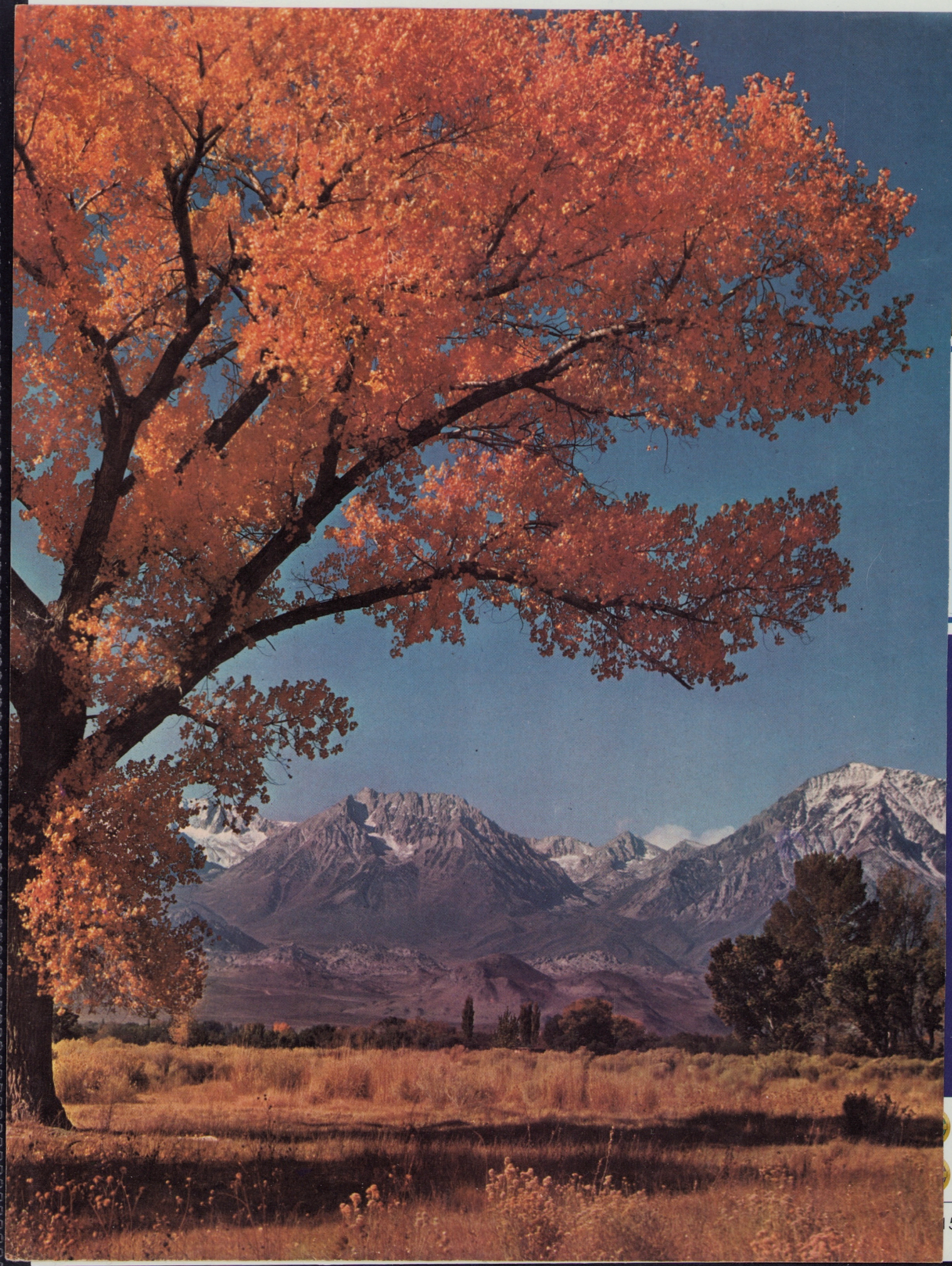
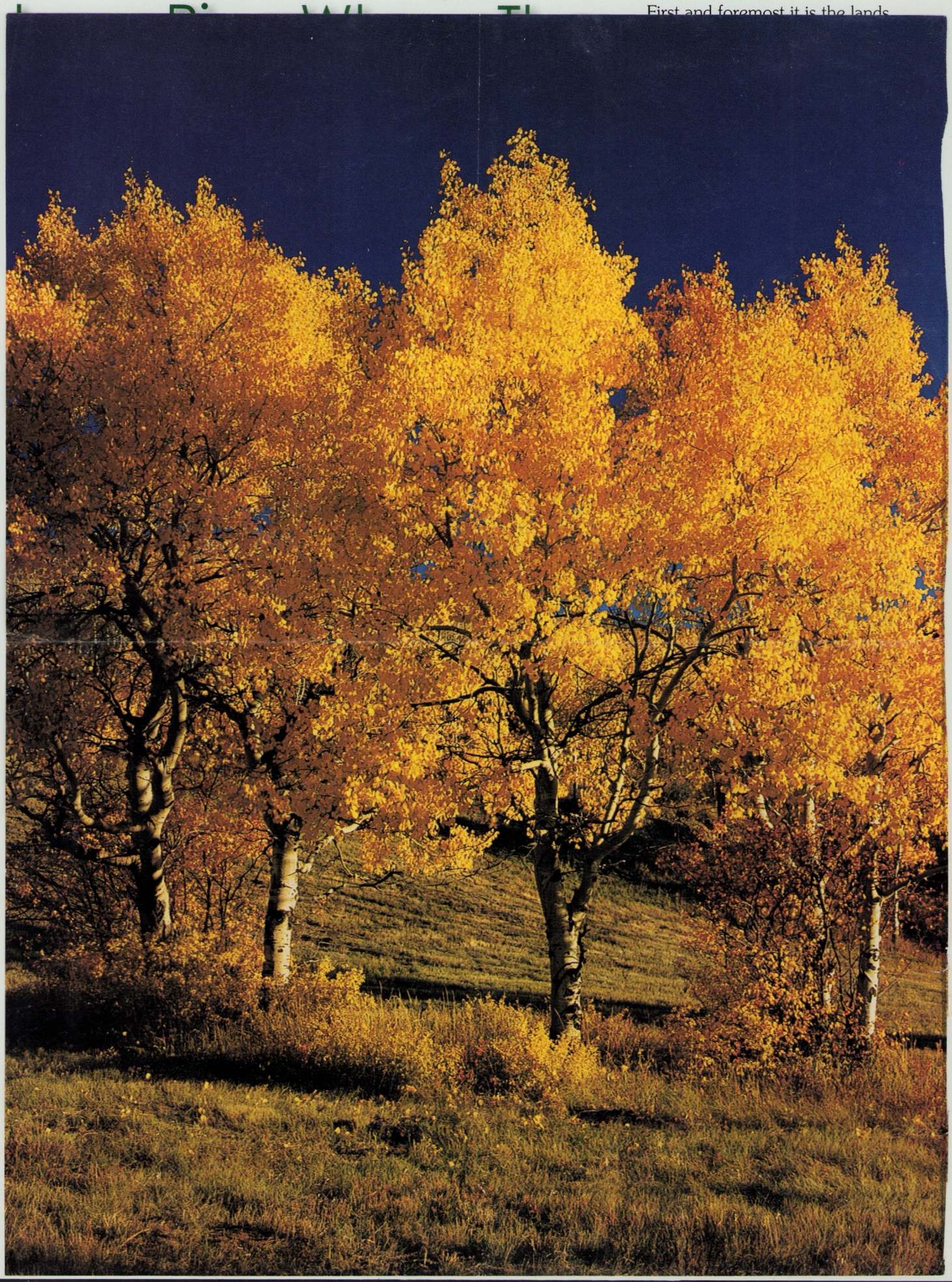




OWENS VALLEY WITH BISHOP BELOW

First and foremost it is the lands



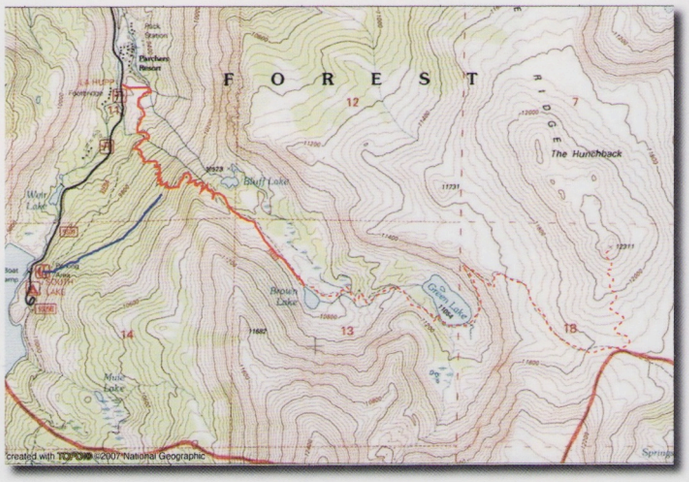
Get Out!

Find Hidden Gems

Green & Brown lakes

by Todd Vogel

Overview



Summer is coming, and when the Valley heats up there's no better way to cool off than a hike to a mountain lake and maybe even a dip. A cul-de-sac of sorts, the trail to Brown & Green lake in the proposed John Muir Wilderness Additions is off the beaten path, but if you are willing to brave the initial switchbacks, the reward that awaits visitors to these lakes is a less-visited alpine basin, wide open vistas, and a stroll along an expansive Sierra shelf.

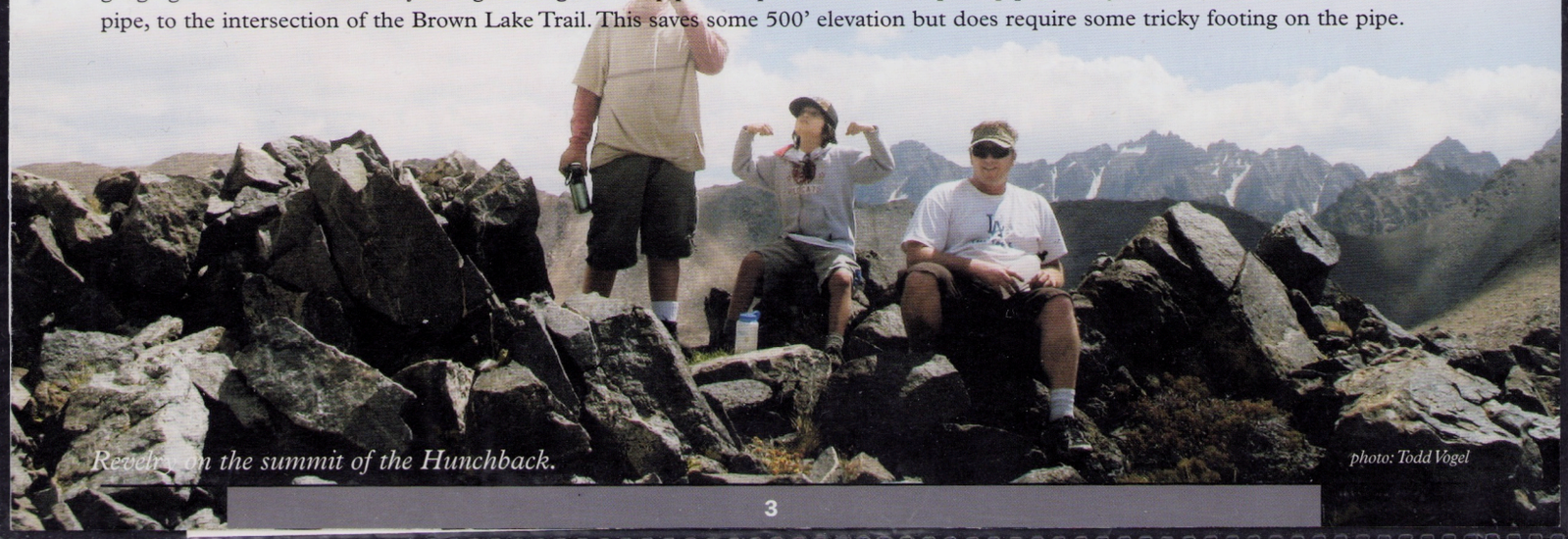
Logistics

From Bishop, find your way up Line Street (Highway 168) to Parcher's Resort, near South Lake. Park at the picnic and day use area just uphill from the resort and follow the use trail on the west side of the road heading over a rocky hill and down to the obvious main trail. Alternatively, one can walk into Parcher's driveway and down towards Rainbow Pack Station, and find the trail there. In either case, head up the main trail a third of a mile or so to the signed junction with the Green Lake Trail at 9,600'. It is easy to miss this turn so stay aware! The trail to Brown and Green lakes zig zags up this steep hill in a business-like way as the views into the basins above South Lake get better with each step and distract from the work of the climb. Brown Lake is about four miles round trip; if you continue on to Green Lake plan on an additional two miles to the trip. Numerous options exist, including even some options for an overnight trip.

The Grunion Run

From Green Lake the trail continues in a giant zig zag north onto the "Grunion Plateau." I have not been able to find anyone who can tell me the origin of the name. To the east of the Grunion Plateau is a neat little peak called The Hunchback on the map. It's an additional hour and half or so from Green Lake to this peak but the view is excellent, with vistas down to Bishop and the peaks of the Palisades and Mt. Humphreys area towering above.

An alternate start to the hike (shown in blue on the map), recommended only for the adventurous and fleet of foot, is to park at the main Bishop Pass Trailhead parking lot, by South Lake. (If only out for a day hike, please be sure to park in the day use spots and save the overnight spots for backpackers). At the highest end of the overnight parking lot is a green gate. Pass through the gate, past the gauging station and notice on your right a large brown pipe. It is possible to walk up the pipe, mostly on a trail but sometimes on the pipe, to the intersection of the Brown Lake Trail. This saves some 500' elevation but does require some tricky footing on the pipe.



Revelry on the summit of the Hunchback. photo: Todd Vogel

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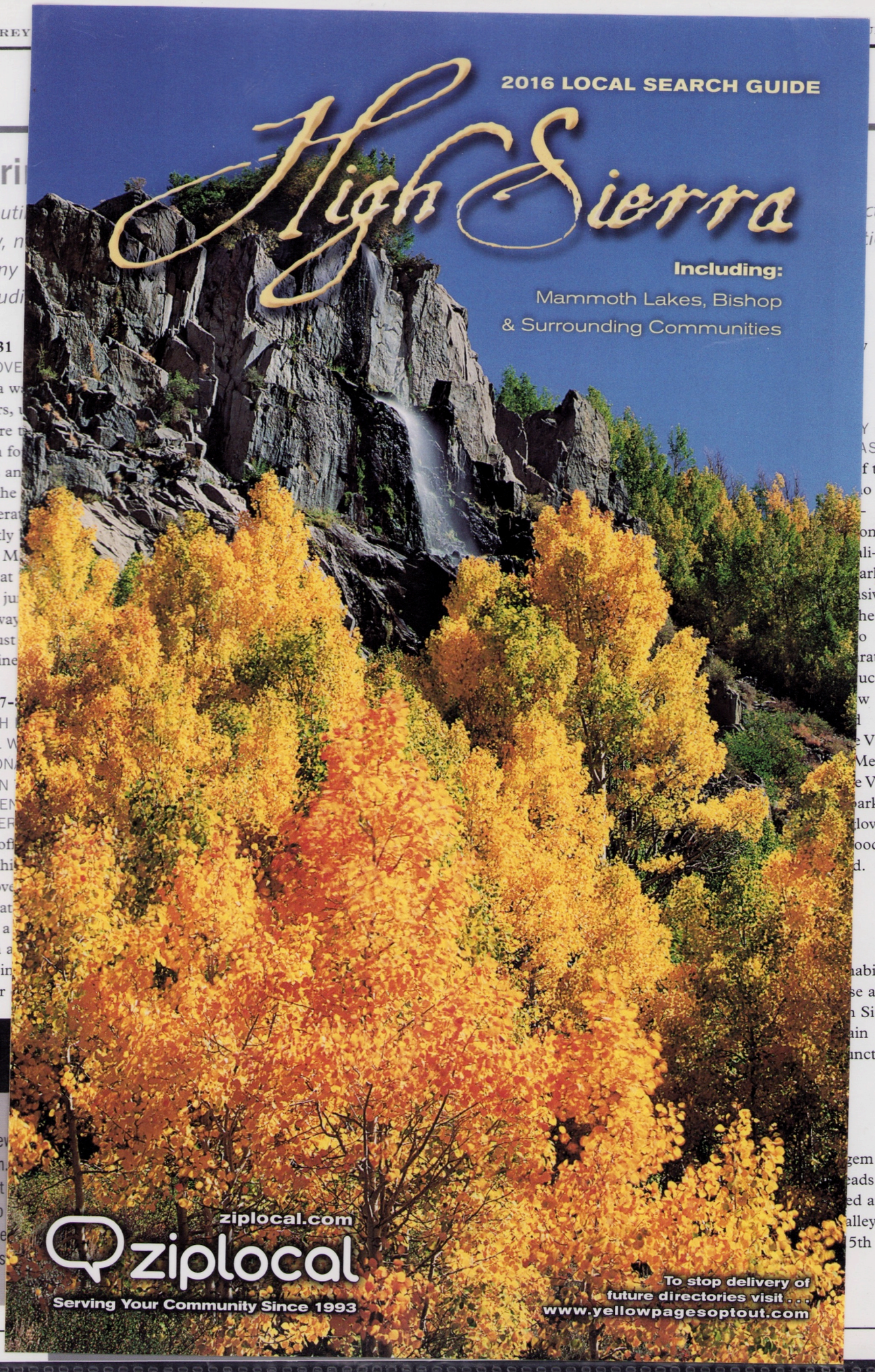

Bishop Creek Canyon

BISHOP CREEK CANYON

Just west of Bishop, California, on the eastern edge of the Sierra Nevada, lies Bishop Creek Canyon. Popular for lake and stream fishing, there's also camping, hiking, backpacking, photography, and horseback riding. The High Sierra scenery here is second to none, with lush forests and cool streams decorating the mountainside.

Photo by Jim Stroup

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A Beautiful Bishop Stream

Bishop-The Hub of Inyo County

Bishop's setting is an irresistible draw to outdoor enthusiasts, artists, and businesses alike. The town is world famous for its scenery, hiking, fishing, climbing, hunting, bakeries, and for its mules. Bishop and its surrounding area is the primary commercial and population hub for Inyo County and west central Nevada.

The Bishop Mule Days Celebration is a six-day event taking place Tuesday through Sunday the week before Memorial Day on the Tri-County Fairgrounds in Bishop, California. The 14-show event begins with preliminaries on Tuesday continuing through Thursday showcasing English, Dressage, Driving, Reining and Youth competition. The event finals begin Friday featuring the top placing competitors vying for World Championships in all disciplines. The championships, comedy classes, packing contests and world class specialty acts all take center stage in multiple arenas Friday through Sunday. The world-famous Mule Days Parade on Saturday is one of the largest non-motorized parades in the nation. The Mule Days Arts & Crafts Show in City Park attracts over 100 skilled craftspeople and vendors.

Bishop also offers an abundance of outdoor recreation and cultural activities. Highway 168 travels deep into the Sierra Nevada Mountains, providing access to scores of campgrounds and trailheads. North Lake, South Lake and Sabrina Lake are all easily accessed from Bishop Creek Canyon, as are miles of some of the finest trout fishing streams in California.

A multitude of additional recreational areas are found in the Bishop area. Pine Creek, Rock Creek, the Owens River Gorge, Fish Slough and Pleasant Valley Reservoir are all less than 30 minutes from downtown Bishop.

Rock climbing has become another very popular form of outdoor recreation in the Bishop area. The "Buttermilks", about 10 miles west of Bishop, offers excellent bouldering opportunities for everyone from beginners to climbers with the highest of skills.

There are also many areas around Bishop that are perfect for jeeps and 4-WD vehicles. Coyote Flat, a vast alpine area over 10,000 ft. that has often been referred to as one of the greatest 4-WD destinations in California, is accessed from just south of town.

The Paiute-Shoshone Cultural Center on West Line St. reflects the history and culture of the Nuumu (Paiute) and Newe (Shoshone) people. The Cultural Center showcases the art and life way of these indigenous people who have lived in the Eastern Sierra for thousands of years. Visitors to the Cultural Center will also enjoy cultural displays, a Memorial Hall paying tribute to Native American Veterans and their families, environmental displays, collections of Native American artifacts, historical archives and media. There is also a wonderful native garden and a walking trail through the tribe's COSA (Conservation

Open Space Area). The Center's Gift Shop offers visitors the opportunity to purchase arts and crafts as keepsakes made by local tribal artisans as well as publications that pertain to native culture.

About 5 miles northeast of Bishop is Laws Railroad Museum. Located on the site of the former Laws Railroad station and rail yard, the land, 1883 depot and other buildings, and the last train, were donated to Inyo County and the City of Bishop by the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1960. The museum is operated by the Bishop Museum and Historical Society. At Laws the narrow gauge locomotive Slim Princess now stands in mute testimony to the time when the Owens Valley depended upon the railroad for its contact with other parts of the world. The Laws Museum also houses an extensive collection of natural, civic, literary and ecclesiastical artifacts and history of the Owens Valley.

You'll find no shortages of services in the town of Bishop. With several hundred motel rooms, more than 30 restaurants and nearly 50 stores, you can rest assured that whatever your need, you'll be able to find it in Bishop. For more information on this "big" little city, go to http://www.bishopvisitor.com/.

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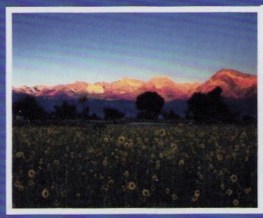
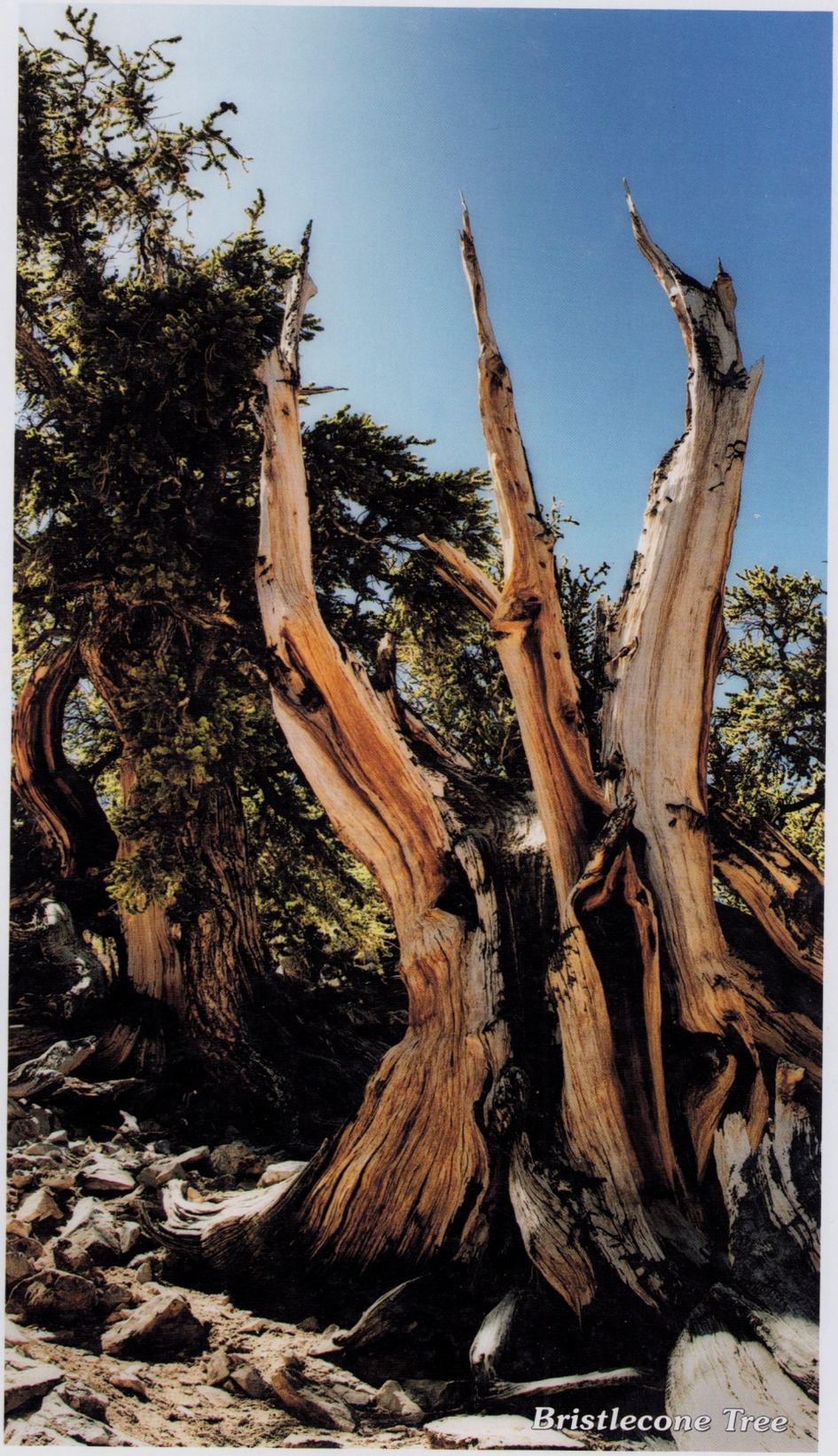


Bishop, California
Small Town With a Big Backyard

Many first time guests who stay in Bishop are awestruck not only by the area's scenic grandeur but by its infinite outdoor and historic recreation opportunities. Like these visitors, once you stay in this charming locale, you discover many hidden gems that often go unnoticed by the hasty Highway 395 traveler. So sit back awhile, learn what Bishop offers, and consider checking into one of the most beautiful and often-overlooked towns in America.

Flanked by 13,000 to 14,000 rugged mountain peaks, Bishop is akin to "small town with a big backyard". To the west, ice age glaciers have carved precipitous and striking canyons where scenic touring, fishing, camping, hiking, mountain biking, and photography beckon. These canyons include Bishop Creek, Rock Creek, and Big Pine Creek Canyons. Rustic lodges and "out of this world" country style fare can be found at each canyon as well as horseback riding and pack operations to ferry guests to the Sierra's topaz colored backcountry lakes.



Bristlecone Tree

Bishop Creek Recreation Area Stream

ROUTE 12

BUTTERMILK COUNTRY

A LOVELY SURPRISE TUCKED INTO THE BASE OF THE SIERRA NEAR BISHOP, THE PICTURESQUE BOULDERS OF THE BUTTERMILK COUNTRY ARE SUPERB YEAR-ROUND BUT UNSURPASSED IN LATE SPRING AND EARLY SUMMER WHEN THE AIR IS FULL OF BIRDSONG AND THE SCENT OF WILDFLOWERS.

What to expect: Begins on a paved highway, then follows a wide, short, rough and bumpy graded dirt road.

Length: 10.9 miles one way.

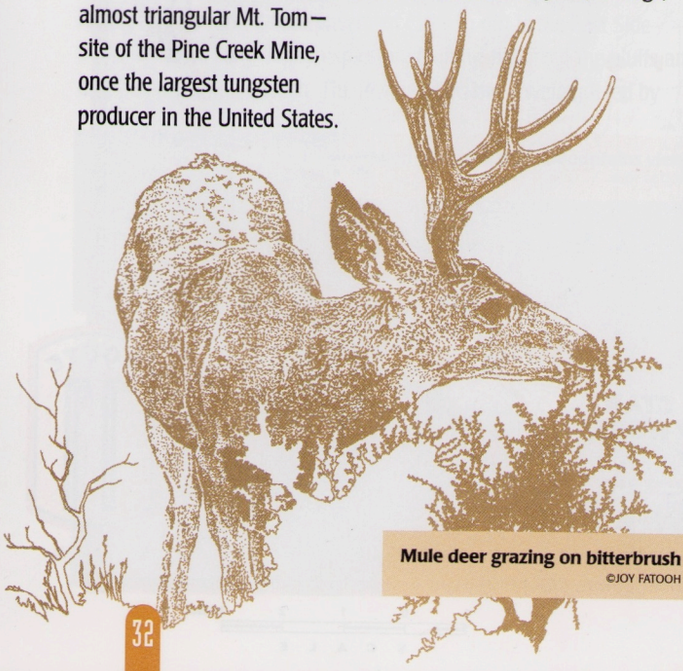
Driving time: about 45 minutes, one way.

Getting there: From Bishop starting at the corner of Main and Line, also known as highways 395 and 168, go west 7.3 miles. Highway 168 leaves town and climbs toward the Sierra. Look for Buttermilk Road on your right.

Along the route: Buttermilk Road crosses a cattle guard and turns to dirt immediately after leaving the highway. Stay on the main, wide, graded dirt road. At three miles you'll climb a small hill, and after another half mile you'll reach another cattle guard and the end of the route (after this the road becomes extremely rough). That's all there is to it! Stop along the way, explore, climb and play.

The Buttermilk Country was named in the 1870s when "Old Joe" Inman—father of the state senator—operated a dairy here. Workers from a nearby sawmill would stop on hot summer days for a drink of cold buttermilk.

To the north are the Tungsten Hills, named for their main mining product. To the northeast, prominent on the Sierra skyline, is huge, almost triangular Mt. Tom—site of the Pine Creek Mine, once the largest tungsten producer in the United States.



Mule deer grazing on bitterbrush
©JOY FATOOH

The willow-lined stream winding through the Buttermilks has, from about May through July, one of the richest populations of breeding songbirds in the Eastern Sierra. Among the most colorful birds found nesting here are black-chinned hummingbirds, green-tailed towhees, red-breasted sapsuckers and yellow warblers. Others are more subtle in color but dazzling in song: American robin, Bewick's wren, house wren, Brewer's sparrow, fox sparrow and warbling vireo. And some, like the black-headed grosbeak, are strikingly handsome and incomparable musicians as well.

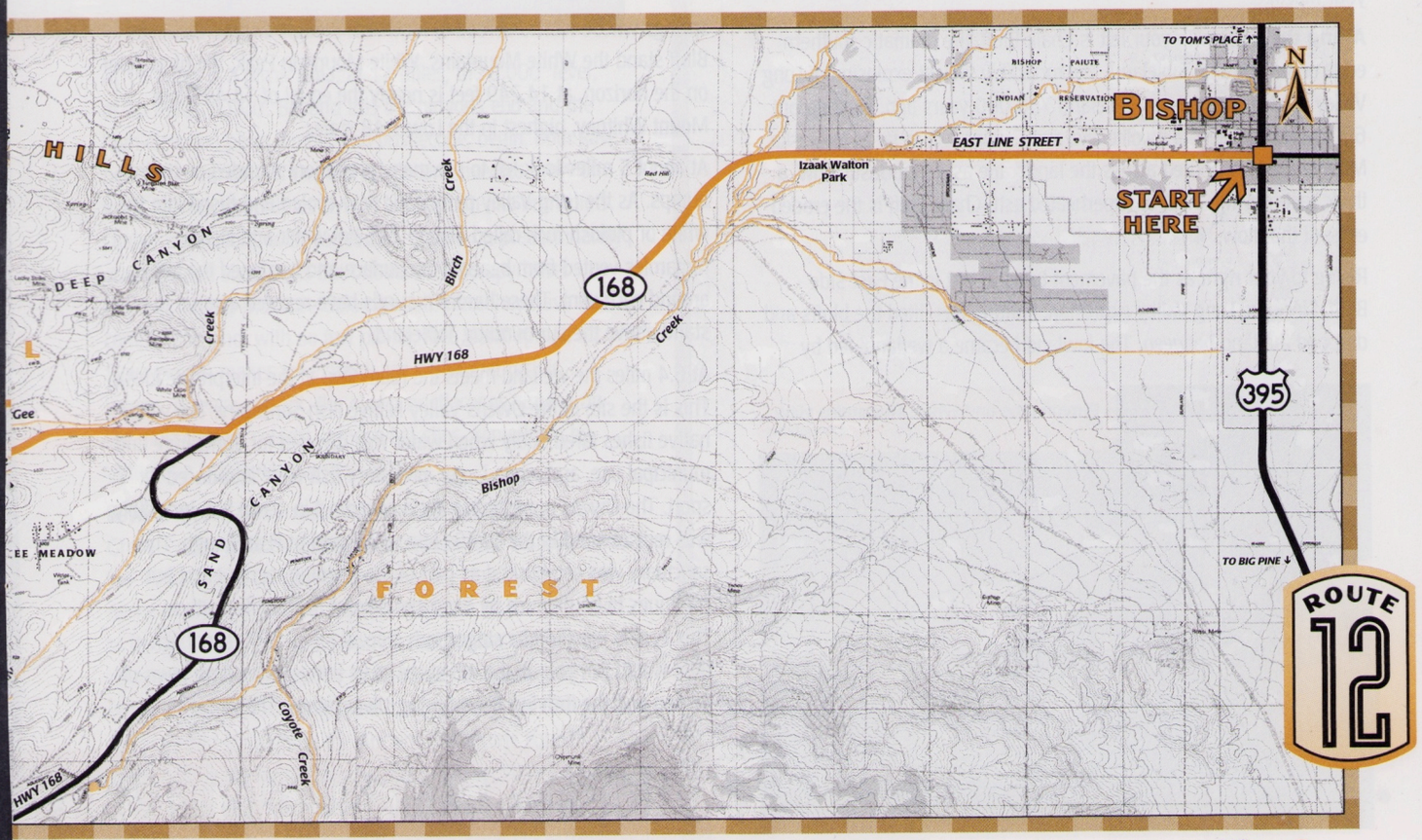
In spring you may find desert peach in bloom. The shrubs can be identified even when leafless by their smooth, spiny, purplish-gray wood. In spring the leaf buds open along with pink blossoms that fill their surroundings with a jasmine-like scent. Small, fuzzy, bitter

peaches develop as summer progresses. Bitterbrush, a member of the rose family which keeps its tiny, three-lobed, dark green leaves year-round, sometimes produces wonderful displays of yellow blossoms with a spicy fragrance in late spring.

Tender young shoots of bitterbrush are an important food for a large herd of mule deer that comes down from the snowy high country to spend the winter in this area. And the deer, in turn, are food for mountain lions. An important reminder: don't allow small children to wander off alone in mountain lion habitat!

Buttermilk boulders
©JOY FATOOH

But do allow children—and adults, yourself included—to clamber on the irresistible rock formations that fill this hidden valley. Legendary early Sierra climbers like Smoke Blanchard would take time off from cliffs and bolts and ropes to enjoy a day of "Buttermilking." They were pioneering the popular sport now known as bouldering, and the Buttermilks are still among the finest places for the art of using natural finger and toeholds on rocks within jumping-off distance of the ground. "Problems" in the Buttermilks range from sloping scrambles almost any kid can do, to walls and overhangs that challenge the strength and agility of the greatest bouldering experts.



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SCALE

Buttermilk Country, Horton Lakes and Climbing Mt. Tom

The Buttermilk Country is a broad open area of the Inyo National Forest that sits at the base of 13,652' Mt. Tom, west of Bishop. Named after a creamery that once operated in the area, "the Buttermilks" have become synonymous with world class bouldering. Spectacular geology, views of the Sierra and White Mountain ranges, a hidden waterfall and peaceful dispersed camping opportunities are but a few of the many delights found in this area.

The area is easy to find: begin at the intersection of West Line and Main Street in Bishop and head west towards the mountains on State Route 168, also known as West Line Street. After 7.7 miles, turn right on the Buttermilk Mountain Road and continue driving west on the main, wide, graded dirt road. A standard clearance passenger sedan can negotiate most of the dirt roads in the area but some of the side roads may require a 4-wheel drive vehicle. Be sure to remain on constructed, maintained roads; do not drive off into the brush or create impacts by driving off-road or creating new roads.

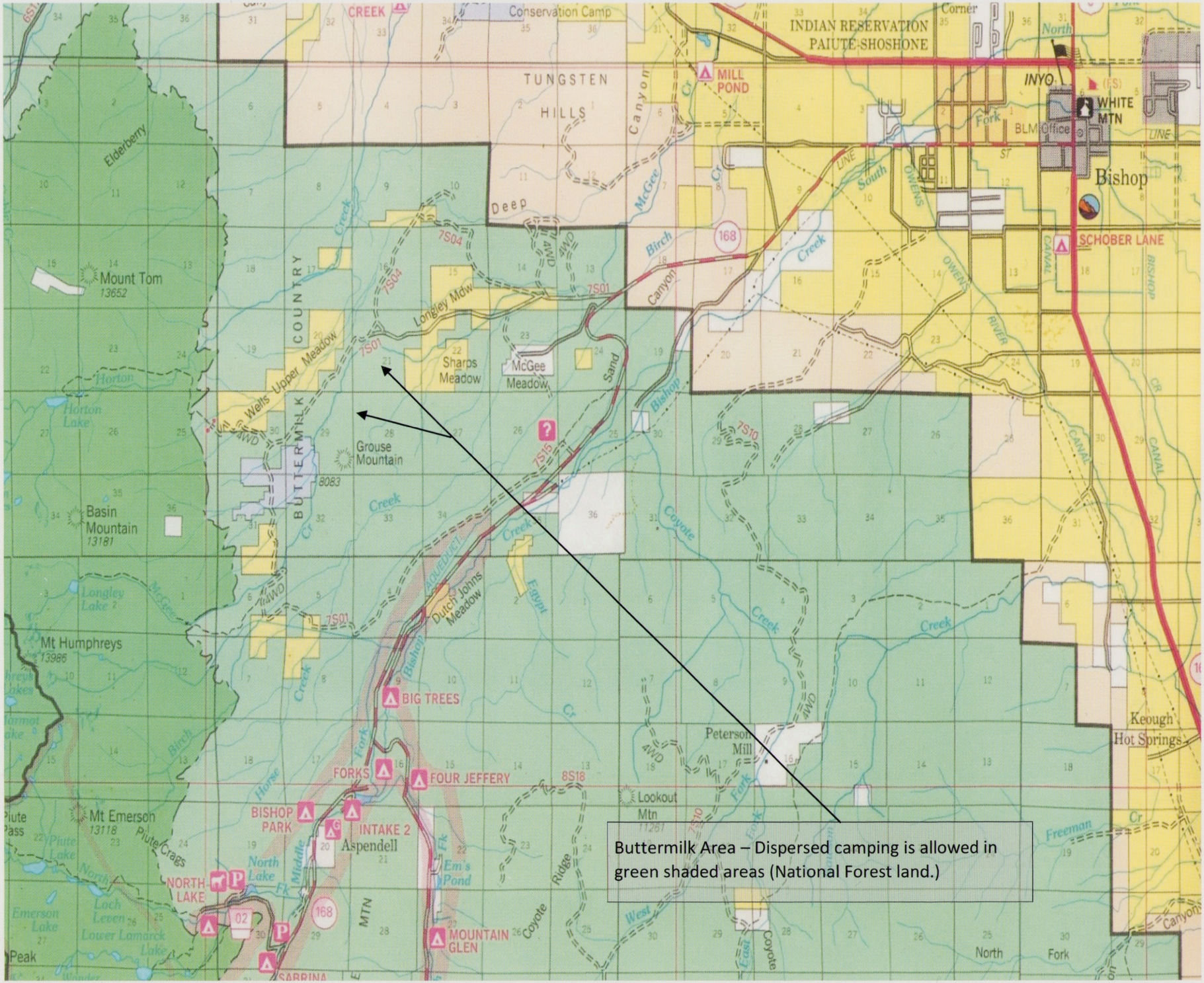
The Horton Lake trailhead is reached by using the same access, driving 6.2 miles on the main dirt road, then turning right at the Horton Creek sign. Proceed another .5 miles and park near the aspens; 4-wheel drive vehicles can go another .2 miles, turn right then proceed another .5 miles to the locked trailhead gate. Please note that the gate is at the wilderness boundary and vehicles, bicycles, motorized or any wheeled equipment is not allowed past this point, wheel chairs exempted.

When camping in the Buttermilk Country, please use Leave No Trace practices and always *fully* extinguish your campfire if you chose to have one. A campfire permit is required, obtainable free of charge at the White Mtn Ranger Station in Bishop. Note that "day use only" Dep't of Water and Power lands and private lands are interspersed with National Forest lands, so please use the map on the reverse side of this hand-out to determine your location. Overnight camping *is* allowed on National Forest lands but is not allowed on other lands in the Buttermilk area. Minimize your camping impacts by selecting a previously used site, clean-up and make your site look as if you were never there!

Climbing Mt. Tom is usually accomplished by hiking to Horton Lake then turning north/northwest toward the peak on an unmaintained "trail." The Mt. Tom 7.5 minute topo map shows the route which goes through the old Tungstar Mine site. Note that this hike is very exposed on the ridge near the peak and should not be attempted by other than experienced backcountry hikers.

Some visitors spend the night at Horton Lakes before the climb – this is in the John Muir Wilderness and requires an overnight Wilderness Permit. Visit the Inyo National Forest website for additional wilderness permit information: www.fs.usda.gov/inyo

Information and printed material provided by the Eastern Sierra Interpretive Association, a partner with the Inyo National Forest.


Buttermilk Area – Dispersed camping is allowed in green shaded areas (National Forest land.)
INDIAN RESERVATION
PAIUTE-SHOSHONE
Conservation Camp
TUNGSTEN
HILLS
MILL POND
WHITE MTN
BLM Office
Bishop
SCHOBER LANE
Mount Tom
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Elderberry
BUTTERMILK COUNTRY
Sharps Meadow
McGee Meadow
Grouse Mountain
8083
Basin Mountain
13181
Mt Humphreys
13986
Mt Emerson
13118
Piute Crags
NORTH LAKE
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FOUR JEFFERY
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INTAKE 2
Aspendell
MOUNTAIN GLEN
Dutch Johns Meadow
Peterson Mill
Lookout Mtn
Keough Hot Springs
North Fork

MAJESTIC VIEW OF THE MOUNTAINS WEST OF BISHOP

Inside the Basin

Was this the work of the Little Ice Age?

By Enid A. Larson

Almost everyone who travels Highway 395 focuses eye and camera upon that great pyramidal mountain that the Paiutes called *pava toiyabe* (Big Mountain) and, since the time of early settlers to Owens Valley has been known to the whites as "Mt. Tom." However, if you will but look to the south of Mt. Tom you will see Basin Mountain rising to an elevation of more than 13,000 feet. In form, it is a model of symmetry. "Old Eagle Tail," my father said the Paiutes called it.

As a child, I yearned to go into that basin. Finally, many years later, John Schober, of a family who came into Owens Valley in the 1860s made it possible for me to do so — that is, I went up to at least 10,600 feet and explored the cirque.

Buttermilk and Wells Meadow lie at its base. Horton Creek, with a fine campground, courses its way downward from the north side of Basin Mountain.

At 10,000 feet elevation, below the entrance to the basin, is a fine old stand of twisted and gnarled Foxtail Pine *(Pinus balfouriana)*.

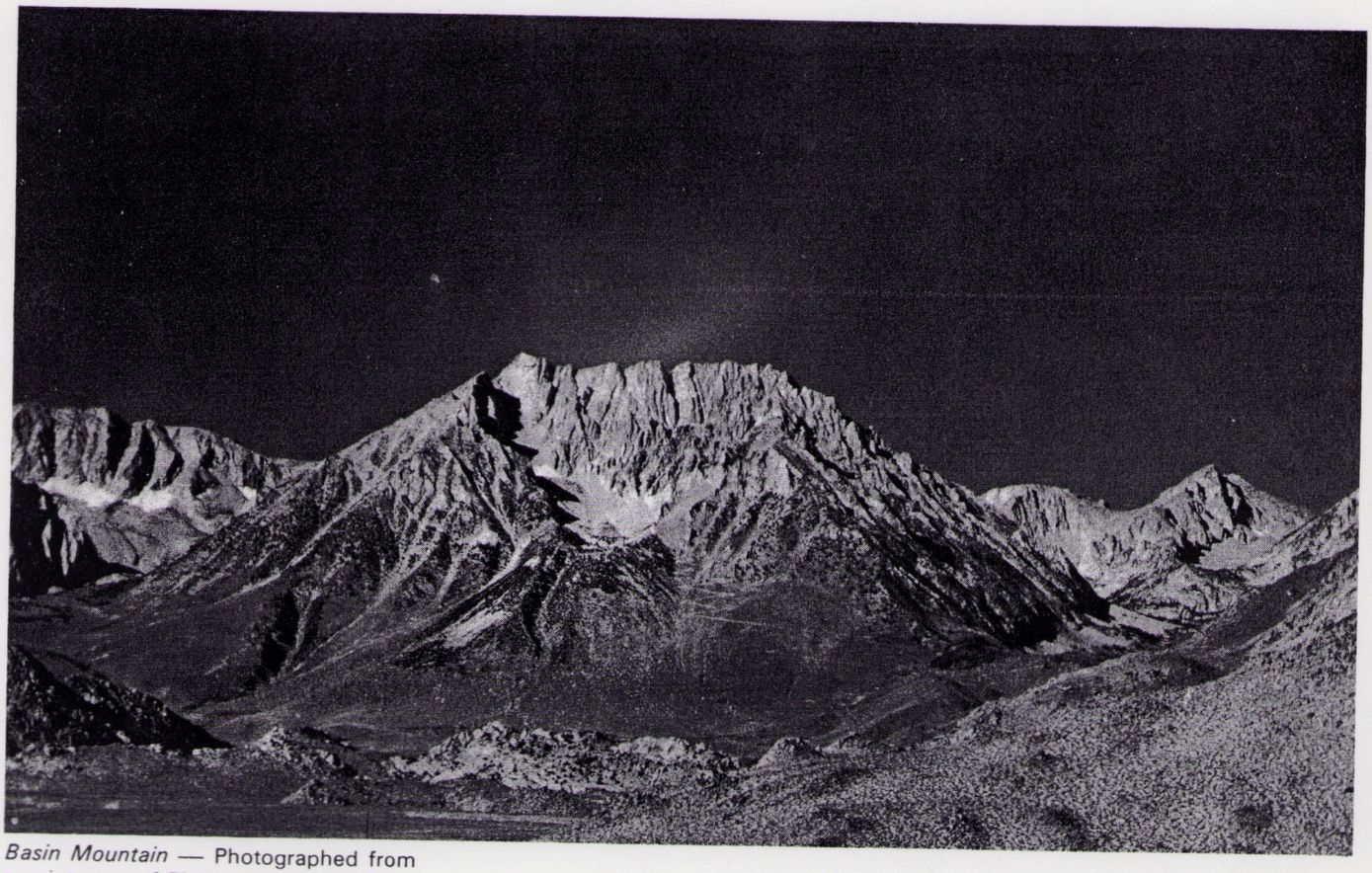
Inside the basin are two parallel moraines, one smaller than the other — clear evidence of the glacier forces that scoured out the contours of this mountain and left a cirque. Was this the work of the Little Ice Age of 4,000 years ago, or that of the earlier Pleistocene Ice Ages? A small stand of stunted Whitebark Pine grows along the northease edge within the basin's entrance. A conspicuous limestone dike traces at an angle obliquely across the northwest wall. A great mass of limestone, 200 feet long by 50 feet wide shows an intrusion of granite that ages ago laid the pattern for a low-grade scheelite deposit.

This tactite depos is located on the north wall, inside the cirque. There a mining claim was filed by Thomas Somer and Pet Jono in 1942. Up to that time the Basin stood in its own pristine glory unmarred by man's activities. Later, the French Mining Company abandoned the claim it had purchased, as non-productive. At present, this mining claim stands in the name of John Schober of Bishop who is actively prospecting.

Within the basin, I stood at timberline, with the great granitic blocks rising as sheer vertical walls around me. Much evidence of the natural erosional patterns and the conspicuous jointing in the granite is clearly shown in the accompanying photos. A chipmunk, presumably the "inyo" chipmunk *(Eutamias umbrinus inyoensis)* called from its undiscovered shelter site. We had invaded its privacy.

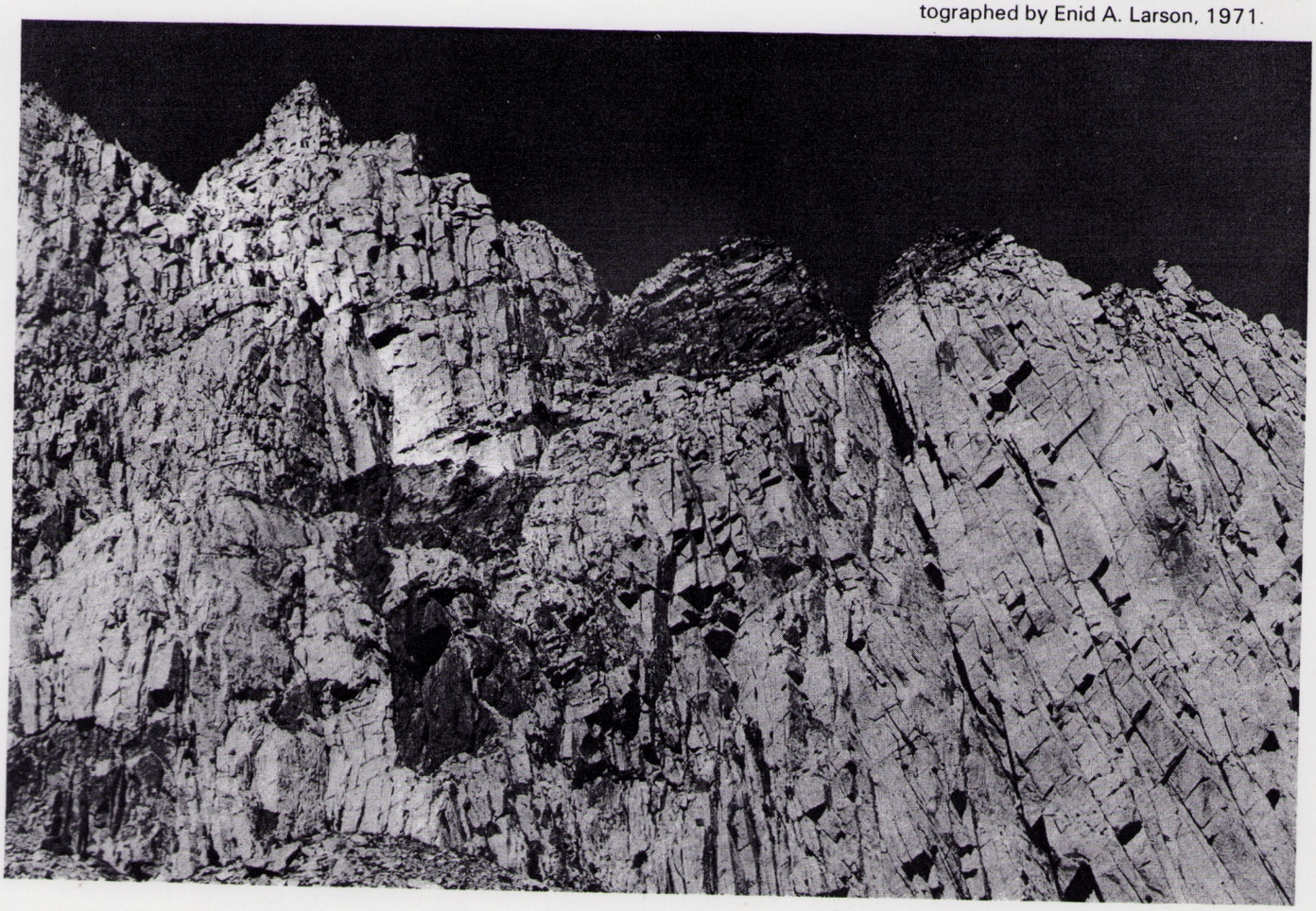
The view across Owens Valley was marred that day by smoggy atmosphere, but White Mountain Peak in the range to the east rose in majestic greatness above the haze. The meanders of Owens River at the base of Chalk Bluffs were distinct in showing the traceries of an old river channel which had established its course so long ago. Each view from the entrance to the basin was an open book that gave clues to Owens Valley's past geologic history.

You do not need to walk into the basin to see its details as I did. All you need is a pair of good field glasses of moderate power of magnification and a willingness to pause in a frantic 70-80 mile speed-race over Highway 395. For your safety, pause at Schober Lane Rest Stop, south of Bishop, or better still, drive slowly southward along Sunland Avenue which parallels Highway 395, or pause in a turnout along Highway 168, west of Bishop, on the road toward Lake Sabrina. At any of these stops you may view and wonder at the serene beauty of Old Eagle Tail. •



Basin Mountain — Photographed from a point west of Bishop, California, by D. Giuliani.

Inside the Basin — North wall — Photographed by Enid A. Larson, 1971.



Buttermilk Country and Horton Lakes

INYO National Forest

The rock formations known as the Buttermilks, just west of Bishop off Hwy 168, are one of California's premier bouldering destinations. These huge granite-like quartz monzonite glacial erratics feature intimidating blank faces, polished patina crimps and plates, smooth slopes and sharp edges. The Buttermilks have a long history of groundbreaking ascents and some of the most soughtafter and aesthetic lines in the world. It is also the site of Smoke Blanchard's infamous Rock Course, the route of which is known to only a handful of local climbers. The boulders are strewn along the Buttermilk road, and it's from this road that they gained their name. Before the water was largely diverted from Round Valley there was a dairy farm that operated next to the creek that still runs there today. The road from the dairy into town was so rough that people joked that the milk was churned into buttermilk along the way.

BUTTERMILK COUNTRY is a broad open area of the INYO National Forest that sits at the base of 13,652' Mt. Tom and Mt. Humphrey's. The area provides endless exploration on foot, by bicycle or vehicle. Spectacular geology, views of the Sierra Nevada and White Mountains, and solitude are but a few of its delights.

DIRECTIONS TO BUTTERMILK COUNTRY AND THE HORTON LAKES TRAILHEAD:

Begin at the intersection of Main and Line Streets in Bishop. Drive west on Line Street (Hwy168) for 7.7 miles to Buttermilk Country Road. The pavement ends in a few feet and becomes a broad graded dirt road. A standard clearance passenger car can negotiate most of the main Buttermilk Country roads. Some of the side roads are steep and rough; only a 4x4 should be used.

HORTON LAKES TRAILHEAD

From the intersection of Hwy 168 and Buttermilk Road, drive 6.2 miles on the main dirt road. Turn right at the Horton Creek sign. Vehicles that aren't four wheel drive or high clearance should drive .05 miles on this road and park near the aspens. Others can go another .02 miles and turn to the right. Follow this road .05 miles to the locked gate. Do not block access to this gate when you park. Note the gate is the wilderness boundary; no vehicles are allowed beyond this point. A wilderness permit is needed only for overnight trips. The quota season is in effect from May 1 thru Oct.31. Contact the White Mtn. Ranger Station for further information.

BUTTERMILK COUNTRY

A California Campfire permit is required when using a stove or making a campfire in Buttermilk Country. Permits can be obtained at any ranger station. Most of Buttermilk country is Inyo National Forest land and you are welcome to camp. Please note that there is also privately owned land and day-use only on Los Angeles Department of Water and Power land within the National Forest.

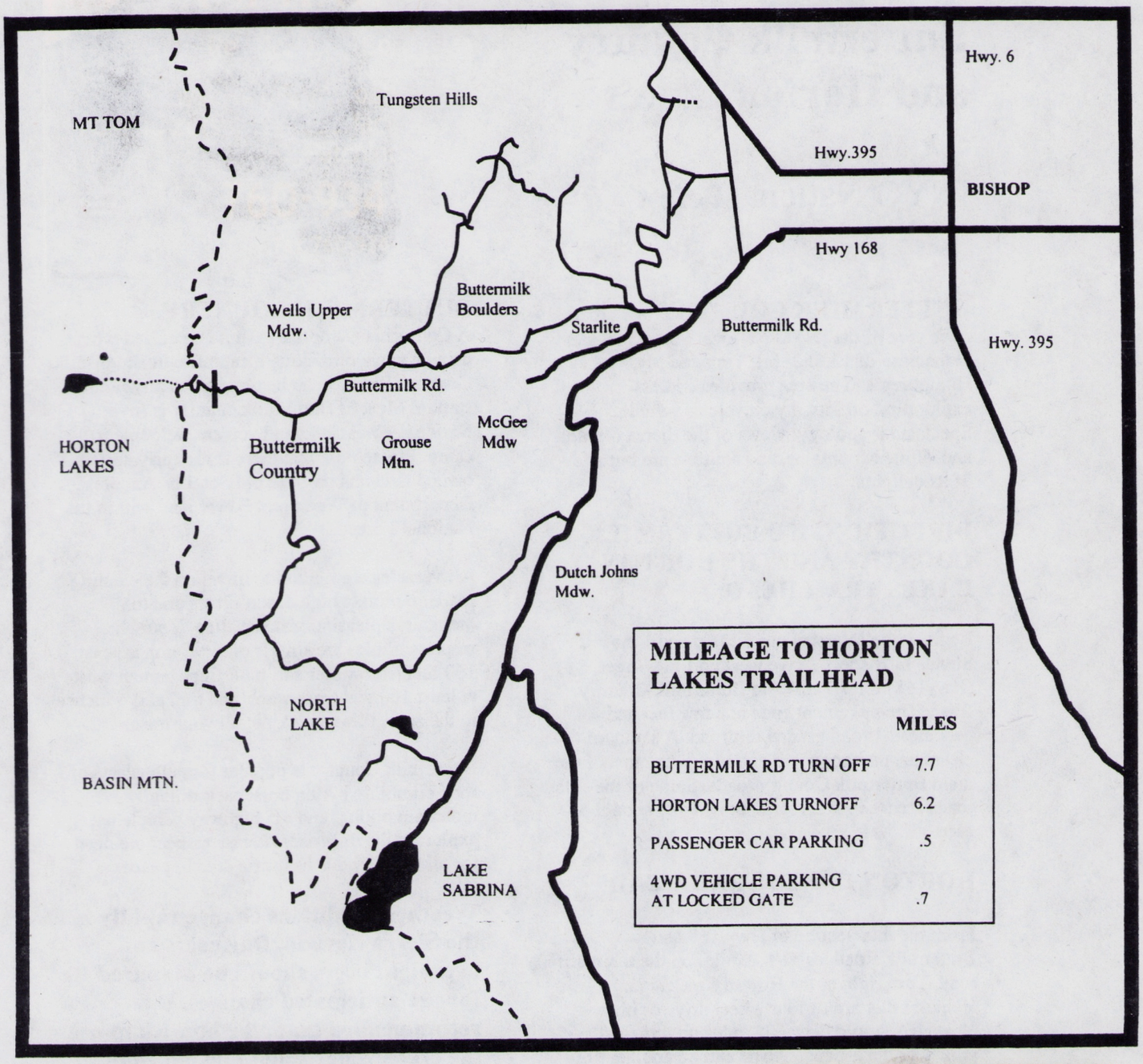
All vehicles are limited to travel on the existing roads to protect high desert plants and to maintain a pleasing visual setting. Your responsibilities are simple ones: Camp at least 100 feet from water and trail. Bury human waste at least 100 feet from water and trail and 6 inches in the soil. Please pack out all your trash.

Buttermilk Country is popular for enthusiasts of rock climbing, hiking horseback riding, mountain biking, and off-highway vehicle users exploring the dirt roads. Please respect the need for all to enjoy this beautiful area in peace.

Weather conditions change rapidly in the Sierra Nevada. Day users and overnight users should be prepared for the anticipated changes. It is recommended that all who wish to use the creek water should be boiled or filtered.

USDA United States Department of Agriculture

White Mtn. Ranger Station



The Buttermilks -This is the main bouldering area. There are many other remote places to boulder, but this is the most popular. Only 10 miles outside of Bishop, it is easily accessible by going west on Hwy. 168 toward South Lake and turning right at Buttermilk road, approximately 7 miles outside of town. Continue west on the well-graded, main dirt road for another 3 miles to the bright rock formations on the right. These are the Buttermilk Boulders and the road continues around the rocky boulder country to the Windy Wall and the Why Boulder.

The Gorge - This is one of the most popular sport climbing area in the state! Difficult routes abound. These are sport climbs, so they are generally well-protected, requiring a rack of quickdraws and some nerve. There are thousands of routes and there is a guidebook available at climbing shops everywhere. Head north on Hwy. 395 for 9 miles and turn right at Lower Rock Creek road. After 1 mile, this road goes right toward the Pleasant Valley reservoir. Head Left and follow the Pipeline Road for access.

MAPS:

John Muir Wilderness Map- Topo
Inyo National Forest Map

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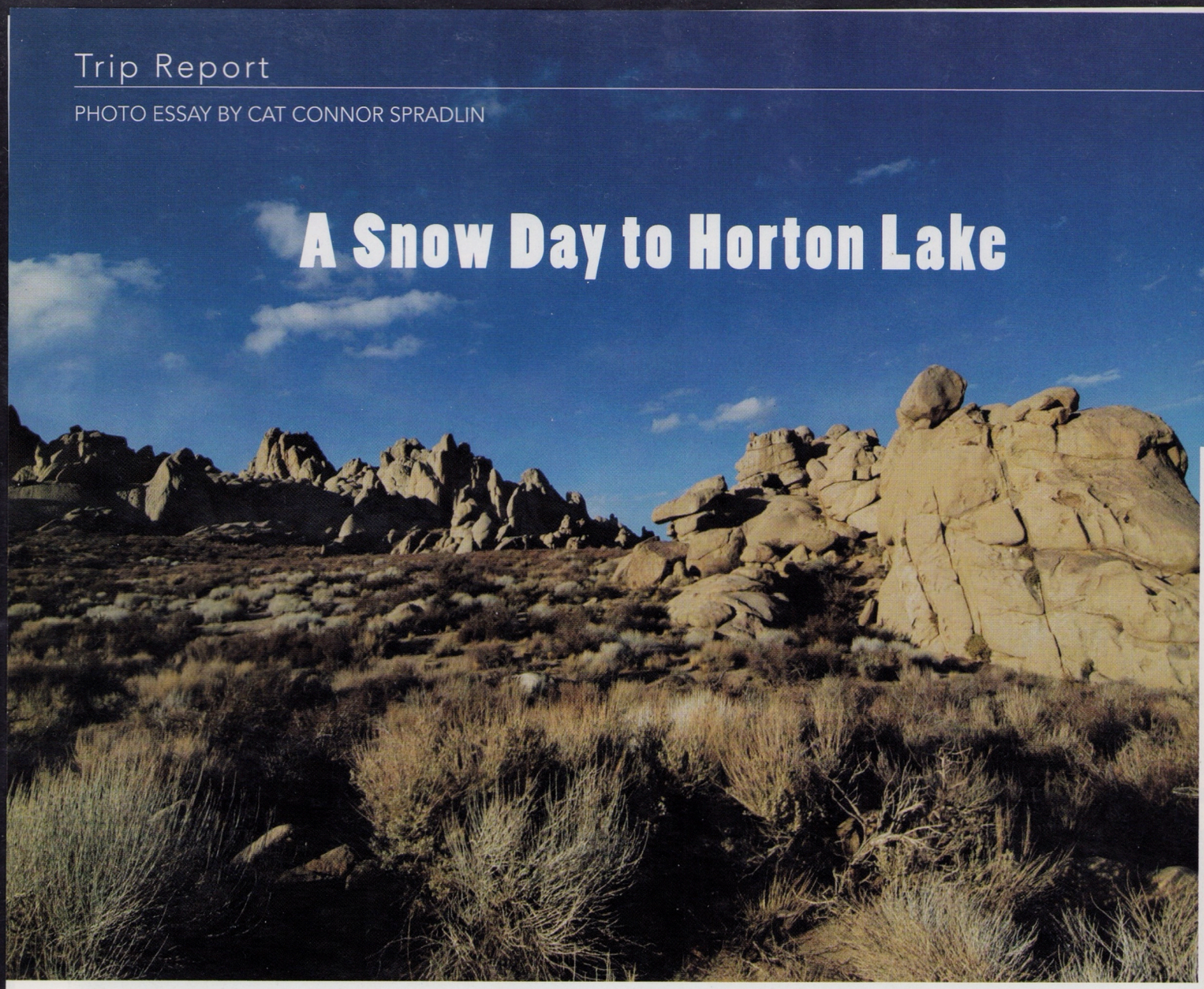
PHOTO ESSAY BY CAT CONNOR SPRADLIN

A Snow Day to Horton Lake



A drive through the Buttermilks at around 6,000 feet; basking in the sun of a cold, crisp, winter morning as we approach our destination.

Our hike begins on an old mining road with majestic Mount Tom looming ahead.

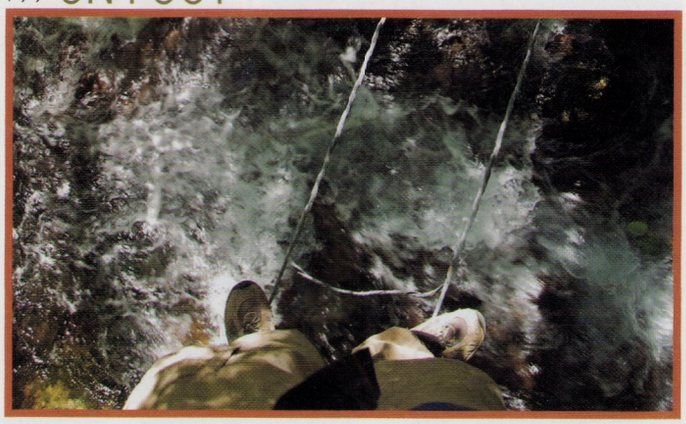
After a series of rugged switchbacks we reach the top of a crest that provides a magnificent view of the Owens Valley below across to the White Mountains.

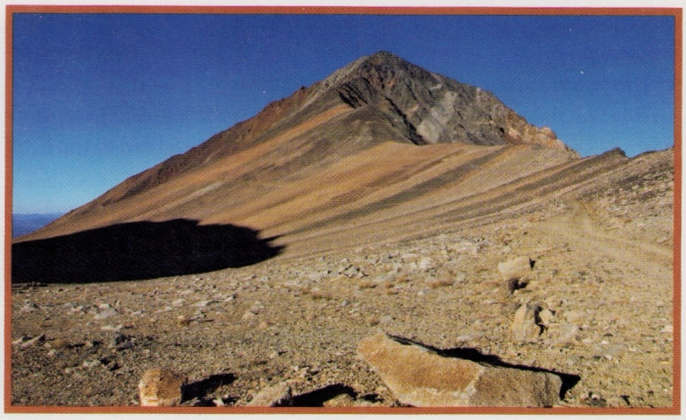
My husband Ed and our dog Scrabble take a moment to enjoy the view. Notice the snow is not too deep yet.

Sonny Boy Mine Settlement at 8,500 feet is the first of two old mine camps.

By the time we reach 10,000 feet the snow is getting deep. Without snowshoes it is making the hike even tougher, and this is a light winter!

At 10,000 feet the abandoned Hanging Valley Mining Co. lies in a blanket of snow just above Horton Lake.





[Top left] **The view down from a cable crossing of Pine Creek.**

[Top right] **The massive southwest expanse of Mt. Tom from Hanging Valley. The old Tungstar Mine road is in the foreground.**

Circumambulating Mt. Tom

A Sierra pilgrimage

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEPHEN INGRAM

360 degrees from the summit of Mt. Tom.

EVER CIRCUMAMBULATE A MOUNTAIN? Millions of people have.

Circumambulation is the act of walking around a venerated object and is usually done in a clockwise direction—the way of the sun. In Buddhist and Hindu traditions it may be done to purify the individual, to protect a sacred place or simply as a gesture of respect. I'm not a religious person, nor especially spiritual, but if I had to name one object as holy and worthy of respect, it would be Mt. Tom. I wanted to circumambulate Mt. Tom as a way to help me think of the mountain more holistically. As long as it might also purify me, I figured, heck, why not? Circumambulating is more about mindful walking than about setting speed records, so three days seemed like the right amount of time for camping, hiking around its entire base and climbing to its summit.

Mt. Tom is unique in the Eastern Sierra for its relative ease of circumambulation. It stands mostly apart from its neighbors and rises nearly 8,000 feet from its eastern and northern flanks to its summit at 13,652 feet. There are other mountains in California that lend themselves to this sacred exercise, such as Mt. Shasta, but other prominent Sierra peaks are not among them.

Mt. Tamalpais, north of San Francisco, attracts scores of circumambulators at each equinox and solstice of the year. This practice was started by Gary Snyder, who, with fellow poets Allen Ginsberg and Philip Whalen, "opened the mountain" by circumambulating Mt. Tam in 1965. Two years later, at the Human Be-In in Golden Gate Park, they invited the public, and it has become a ritual for many over the past 43 years.

My circumambulation of Mt. Tom coincided with the autumnal equinox, which seemed like a propitious time and a fitting way to mark the change of seasons.

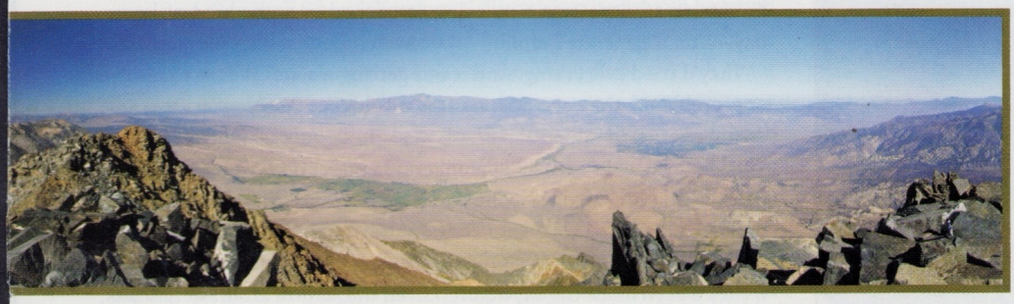
Mt. Tom is drained on the southeast by Horton Creek, on the west by Gable Creek and along its northwestern base by Pine Creek. The Horton Lakes Trailhead was the obvious starting point, and with good campsites at Lower Horton Lake only about four miles away, the first day would also be the best day to climb to the summit of Mt. Tom.

Following the traditional route up the mining road from Lower Horton Lake starts out easily, but above the Tungstar Mine the climb gets a bit more strenuous. This is where Mt. Tom teaches you all about the angle of repose. The upper portion of Mt. Tom is really just a humongous pile of rocks—all kinds of rocks. Rocks of varying sizes with various amounts of potential energy seem to be waiting for some hiker to step on them and send them (and the hiker) tumbling downhill. However, the view from the summit is one of the best in the Eastern Sierra, offering expansive vistas that range from the high peaks of both Yosemite and Kings Canyon national parks to the distant desert ranges of Death Valley National Park.

The next morning found me on another scree slope, getting another lesson on the angle of repose as I worked my way westward and upward out of Horton Lakes Basin. The hike toward the pass between the Horton and Gable lakes basins brought me to the east face of Four Gables at the southwestern-most point of the circumambulation. Here, large granite blocks of talus led the way up to the southern end of Gable Lakes Basin—and, at 11,500 feet, the highest point of the circumambulation—with a new view of Mt. Tom to the northeast.

Horton Lake and the Owens Valley from the southwest slope of Mt. Tom.

After a layover day in Gable Lakes Basin devoted to exploration and photography, I hit the trail early for the quick descent down Gable Creek to Pine Creek. As my circumambulation transitioned from dirt trail to asphalt road, I reminded myself that today's leg was twice as long as the first two days combined; I savored the cool shade cast by Mt. Tom in Pine Creek Canyon and tried to prepare for temperatures in the low 90s. My chosen route over the lateral moraine of this glacial canyon was beneath the power lines, reminders that this journey was more than a "wilderness experience." Where the power lines span Pine Creek I was pleasantly surprised to find a cable footbridge that led me across the rocky, rushing waters of the creek.



Walking south along the eastern base of this massive mountain was the most laborious part of the adventure, but also the most enlightening. Large boulders that had rolled down from the upper slopes of Mt. Tom provided the only shade available between Pine Creek and Horton Creek. The heat and distance of the day taught me that two-and-a-half liters of water is not quite enough to get from Pine Creek to Horton Creek. So when I heard the rush of Horton Creek, I was relieved, big time. I soaked my body, drank my fill, soaked my head again and walked the final two-and-a-half miles back up to the trailhead, closing the circle around Mt. Tom.

A different approach that would give more balance to the circumambulation of Mt. Tom would be to go lighter, with just a daypack, and do it in two days. The first day would take you from Horton Creek Trailhead up into Gable Lakes Basin and down into Pine Creek, a distance of some 14 miles. This would require leaving a cooler with beer (and other camping necessities) at the campground in Pine Creek and doing the second leg from here back to the trailhead the next day, a walk of similar mileage through Great Basin scrub. (Perhaps Great Basin Bakery and Mammoth Brewing Company would like to sponsor my next circumambulation...)

The circumambulation of Mt. Tom offers a variety of interesting terrain and habitats: mining roads, boulder fields, hiking trails, scree slopes, alpine meadows, coniferous forests, riparian forests and several versions of Great Basin sagebrush scrub—burned and unburned, grazed and ungrazed, weedy and entirely native. And many, many rocks. Now when I ponder the infinite, I don't wonder about the number of stars in the universe or the grains of sand at the beach. I think of the infinite number of rocks that cover Mt. Tom. ■

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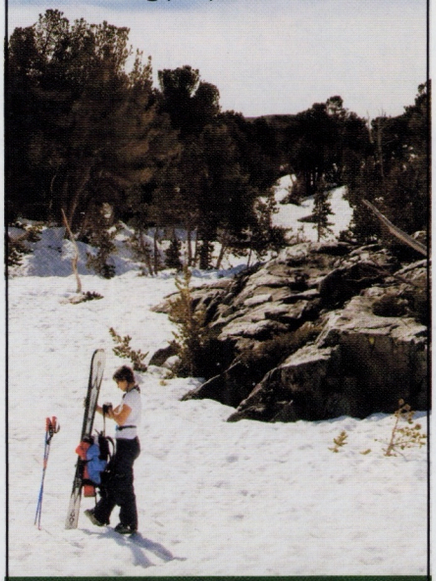

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Coyote Flat
Inyo National Forest

Directions to Coyote Flat Country
Travel west on Line Street (Hwy 168) out of Bishop. Drive 2.6 miles to Riata, turn left and continue 1.1 miles, turn right on the dirt road (past the curve). This road is unsigned. Proceed south on this dirt road and turn right before the power substation. Follow this road up to **COYOTE FLAT**. Signing in the Coyote Flat is very poor and we do recommend using a topographic map.

Road Conditions
The Coyote Flat road is a primitive road with many areas of rocks, step grades, and uneven roadbeds. A four-wheel drive vehicle with high clearance is recommended. The steep terrain begins at the lower elevations where the temperatures are often above 100 degrees F. Visitors should ensure their vehicle engine cooling system is working properly. Currently all open roads are passable. Some existing roads on Coyote Flat have been closed and rerouted to aid in meadow and wetland preservation. The road is closed and impassable past Schober mine. Please help us in maintaining the scenic beauty of this area; by not operating any vehicles on the roads that are posted closed. **VEHICLES ARE RESTRICTED TO EXISTING ROADS ONLY.**

Camping
Coyote Flat offers many opportunities for dispersed camping. Baker Creek, to the south, offers many camping sites adjacent to the creek. Many sites are also located adjacent to the road to Coyote Lake.

Campfires
A California Campfire Permit is required for all open fires. This includes open campfires, stoves, and lanterns. Permits are free and are available from any Ranger Station. Before building a campfire, be sure to check on current fire restrictions. All visitors are responsible for obtaining this information **BEFORE** building a campfire or using a stove, stove fire, or barbeque.

Wilderness
Access to the John Muir Wilderness is easy from Coyote Flat , but the road is in bad shape. Trails begin from the camping area at Baker Creek (west end). The trails lead to, Baker, Hidden, Thunder and Lightning, Green and Brown Lakes. These trails are less popular and hikers should carry a topographic map when hiking in these areas. **NO MOTORIZED VEHICLES OR BICYCLES ARE PERMITTED WITHIN THE WILDERNESS.** A wilderness permit is required for overnight use.

Maps
Direct signing is limited in Coyote Flat and the general vicinity. Visitors to the area should carry a topographic map and be prepared for several roads not to be published on the maps. The Inyo National Forest map covers Coyote Flat and the surrounding areas. For more detailed information the John Muir Wilderness Map and USGS topographic maps cover the area. The appropriate 7.5-minute topographic quadrangle maps are: Bishop, Big Pine, and Coyote Flat.

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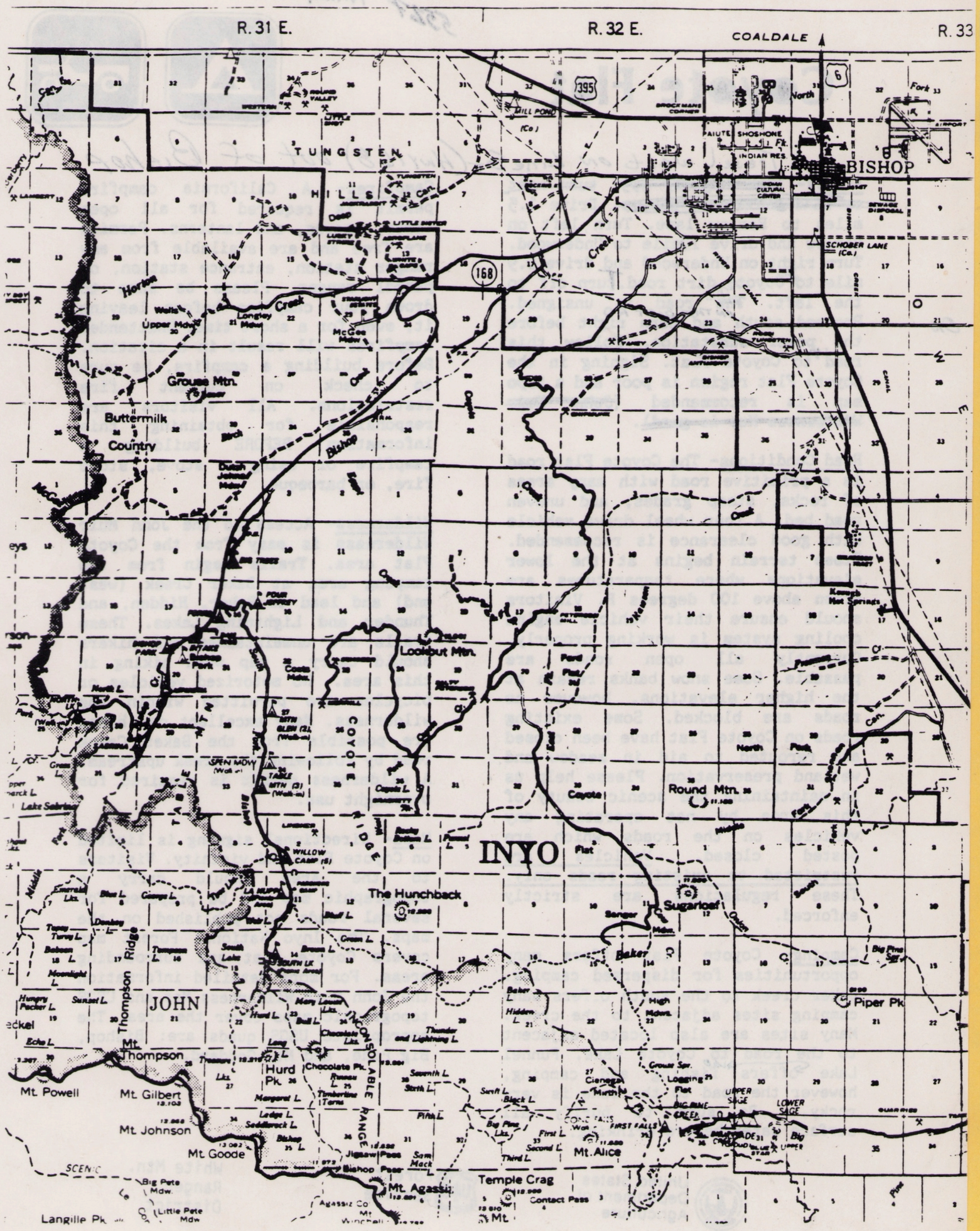
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R. 33
COALDALE
TUNGSTEN
HILLS
BISHOP
PAIUTE SHOSHONE INDIAN RES.
INDIAN CULTURAL CENTER
SCHOBER LANE (Co.)
Horton Creek
Wells Upper Mdw.
Longley Mdw.
McGee Mdw.
Grouse Mtn.
Buttermilk Country
Bishop Creek
Lookout Mtn.
COYOTE RIDGE
Coyote
Round Mtn.
INYO
Flat
The Hunchback
Sugarloaf
Baker
Piper Pk.
JOHN
Thompson Ridge
Mt. Thompson
Mt. Powell
Mt. Gilbert
Mt. Johnson
Mt. Goode
Hurd Pk.
Chocolate Pk.
CONSOLABLE RANGE
Mt. Alice
Temple Crag
Mt. Agassiz
Bishop Pass
Contact Pass
Langille Pk.
Big Pete Mdw.
Little Pete Mdw.
Lake Sabrina
North Fork
Big Pine Creek
UPPER SAGE
LOWER SAGE
FIRST FALLS
SCENIC

Bishop Creek Canyon

Hiking the Eastern Sierra high country above Bishop

Story and photos by Dave McNeill

7-2009

When it comes to the Eastern Sierra, Mammoth Lakes seems to get all the attention. Yet, there are other places close by that are just as majestic like Rock Creek and Bishop Creek Canyon. Within a 20-minute drive from Bishop, the visitor can travel through desert scrub, pinyon forest, alpine and high country at 10,000 feet. Bishop Creek is the largest canyon in the region with three separate and distinct basins: North Lake, South Lake and Sabrina Lake.

North Lake

North Lake is accessed by a scary one-lane dirt road. If one wheel goes off the shoulder, you better hope you can bail out. Otherwise, the authorities will find what remains of you a thousand feet below at the Cardinal Lodge, and you won't be checking out.

Several trails access the wilderness at North Lake, and the trail to Grassy Lake is short, steep and sweet. I like to take the shortcut up the old cowboy trail that starts where the road crosses the creek before heading into the campground. The trail levels out at the top and goes along the creek through a beautiful lodgepole pine forest lined with small meadows, riparian zones and flowers. Lodgepole forests are so clean that it looks like the forest fairies came in at night and raked up all the branches and debris. They are quiet places deep in the forest, somewhat protected from the violence of the winter storms.

As I arrived at Grassy Lake only a mile from the trailhead, I realized that this place is one of the most beautiful spots around. It is lush and Leprechaun green with radical rust-colored crags shooting straight up. The lake has a colorful history of cowboys and sheepherders.

There is a price to pay in these rich places in summer, because the more beautiful it is, the more mosquitoes there are. It is always a trade off in the woods. Many a hiker has been known to run screaming out of the mountains driven to madness by the unrelenting little bloodsuckers. It makes one wonder how Native Americans dealt with it.

As I stood in the meadow watching my dog run through the tall grass, I thought to myself, I don't know how much closer a person can get to heaven on earth than this.

South Lake

The first mile that heads up out of the South Lake trailhead is actually an old road that was constructed for logging to make planks for the dam. The retaining walls that the workmen built for the road are substantial and up to 25 feet high. The road ends at a mill site where many stumps remain from intensive harvesting.

There are many choices to take from South Lake and most people pack in over Bishop Pass.

As I stood in the meadow watching my dog run through the tall grass, I thought to myself, I don't know how much closer a person can get to heaven on earth than this.

Within two miles of the trailhead are lovely little lakes off the beaten path such as Hurd, Marie Louise, Bull and Chocolate. Another trail heads toward the inlet of South Lake and goes to Treasure Lake. As its name implies, it is a true beauty shimmering in multi-colors in the sun.

Long before there was a power plant or dam at South Lake, cowboys from Bishop were riding up rough trails and marking blazes on the trees. This was no Marlboro ad but the real deal. They were riding their horses at high elevations with a mountain backdrop like no other in the world. It must have been a very special feeling for them to be out there alone in the true wilderness in the 1890s.

Later, in the 1920s, mule packers from the resorts would use the old trails to pack in hunters. Now they are abandoned to time and history. Only the blazes are left to tell where the cowboys went, and when those trees blow down or burn up, that will be the end of it.

Higher up the slopes the sage and bitterbrush grow low to the ground and cling to the rocks to escape the wind. Out on the exposed slopes the blowing snow and sand blast uprooted trees into beautiful golden patterns of sculptured art. Down lower in the forest great clouds of yellow dust blow through the trees to pollinate them.

As I descend down into the forest and approach a small opening in the aspens, a deer springs off into the woods, a baby grouse takes flight, and a red-tailed hawk swoops down with its wings folded back in a stealth maneuver to nab a chipmunk. There sure is a lot of life in these woods.

Sabrina Lake

Sabrina sits like a princess between her fair sisters to the north and south. There are so many drainages and so little time. If there were ever one constant thing about the mighty Sierra Nevada it would be that it doesn't matter where you go, because it is all good.

A nice little stroll on the trail around the lake leads to the junction of George Lake, a side canyon that offers everything a visitor would want to see. It is as beautiful as can be with peaks rising up out of the hanging valley.

All these side canyons are typical U-shaped glacial valleys that were cut off by the main ice sheet as it advanced down and left massive amounts of debris behind.

Midway on the trail are some sweet places with small meadows. In one of these meadows is a snow survey station, where snow depths are recorded every year. Metal signs nailed high in the trees designate it as a snow survey area. At this location, a small, 10-inch lodgepole hangs over the trail. Carved in the backside of the tree is the date 1896.This was a prime area for Basque sheepherders, and they grazed it to the full extent. Everybody and their brother walks under this tree not knowing what is right on the other side, or what ghosts of history are up there.

Any time spent in the Eastern Sierra at a destination like Bishop Creek will be well remembered and a worthwhile experience. One that the visitor can take home with them and cherish for the rest of their lives.

A carving done by the last Basque sheepherders to leave Bishop Creek in the late 1960s. Their idea! woman at the time looks like a dominatrix. Far cry from the bustles and bows of 1895. Note the coyote chasing a quail above the female figure.

Connie above Em's pond

LINDNER TRAIL 2009

South Lake

The Lindner Mine

10-2007 Mammoth Times

by Dave McNeill 872-6064

The Lindner Mine Trail is not really the name of this trail. I just call it that because when you get to the top some fellows from Bishop named Lindner had a small mining operation up until 2000. Probably three people go up the trail each year: me, myself and Ike Lamarck. There's just no place that Ike hasn't been.

It begins at Em's Pond about 17 miles west of Bishop, California on the South Lake Road. Em's Pond is on the left before the Tyee Trail and across from the meadow with the rock-lined parking area. The Lindner Mine Trail is another Art Schober production, and I am sure he had his own name for it. He also had a mine next to the Merrill Mine. Art was the man who packed mules all over the Bishop Creek Canyon and built most of the trails. He rode his horse all over the country and knew all the best ways to get to a place. In fact, if Art couldn't get there, it couldn't be done on a horse. A lot of his old trails are out of use today. They are washed out with downed trees and rock slides erasing sections on the steeper slopes. Art's trails are just too radical for the modern-day hiker; it is like going cross country versus the freeway.

The trail is hard to locate when you leave Em's Pond, and there are some small arrows carved on aspen trees along the way. Where the aspens end and hit a granite ridge is the place to go up. You definitely have to work your way up this trail, because there is a lot of granite, shale and slate. It's in surprisingly good shape farther up below some switchbacks that Art made. The views from here of South Lake Basin and the Tyee Basin are superb.

At one point along the trail I saw some bear scat with little pieces of tin foil and plastic wrappers embedded in it. The bear must have come up from one of the campgrounds down below. That reminds me of some of the trail camps I have seen that have been hit by bears. Sometimes the trail crew would get snowed out by a freak storm and have to leave all the food and gear in the backcountry. One huge camp was left all winter one year, and you talk about a mess. Good Lord!

Every single thing, from canned food to tents, tarps and equipment, was destroyed. Huge cans of beans, chili, and juice-you name it-were all bitten into, ripped apart and had the contents sucked out. It took us days to clean up all of that stuff and pack it out. Farther up the trail I came across a ski glove that someone dropped. Every now and then I find a knit hat, glove or ski pole handle to remind me that some people love to ski these nice mountain slopes in winter. Sometimes articles of food and clothing drop out of their pockets or packs. Bears usually get the food and then poop on the clothing to let the humans know how they really feel about them.

The trail finally entered a Limber Pine forest and started to get real pleasant. A lot of the Limber Pines at this elevation of 10,000 feet are large and very old. They have that beautiful golden grain and are mighty strong hanging out on the rocky sides of the mountains against the fiercest of winds and snow. When I reached the top of the trail where it widened out into a beautiful little meadow with a spring, there was a road. Here, I had hiked all the way up that rough old trail only to find that people can drive in from Coyote Flat. That's okay because someday one of those people will be me. I needed the exercise anyway.

ALONG THE TRAIL 8-30-2008

Exploring the wild Coyote area

By David McNeill

The Schober Mine cabin is located high in the Coyote area in the rugged mountains southwest of Bishop.
Photo by David McNeill

I am a newcomer to the Coyote area southwest of Bishop. True to its name, Coyote is a wild, mountainous region, rugged as can be and unique in its variety of ecozones. I haven't even made it to Coyote Flat yet, because I have been too busy working my way up from the foothills out of Bishop Creek.

Because Coyote is so steep and rocky, there are few roads that access the area. OHV (Off Highway Vehicle) roads come in from Big Pine, Bishop, but everything else is trails and cross country. There are many roads at the top of Coyote that lead into primitive locations that were built for mining. It's a rare opportunity today for OHV people to access such beautiful, Sierra-like wilderness. Coyote affords a superb chance for hikers to get into incredible, dream-like places far from any road. The only scant trails you will find out there are made by deer.

The terrain that leads up to Coyote is rough, with steep hillsides consisting of loose granite, slate and volcanic rock. There are large granite cliffs, thick brush, giant California Mahogany groves, Pinyon/Jeffrey forests, and finally a mixture of Limber/Lodgepole Pines at the higher elevations. It is a beautiful thing to be able to walk through so many ecozones in one day.

I cut my teeth on the whole Coyote scene in Little Egypt and learned how much the Paiute people valued this sacred land. I started to venture farther out to explore new places in the Coyote foothills, within a day's hike. It started to get more and more incredible, and now I am hooked.

I will try to describe what the Bishop version of Coyote is like that leads up to South Lake.

Down lower, rock climbers access an old trail from pioneer days off the Chipmunk Canyon Road that leads to Coyote Flat. The next access is the Coyote Road that is the main way to get into the interior. This road is scary and has a lot of whoop-dedos and high banked turns from the ATV/motorcycle speed demons. I like to four-wheel to gain access to remote places, but when I can't take the beating anymore, I get out and walk. Aunt Wilma used to say, "When you get tired of walking, run awhile!"

Before the Coyote Road was built, an old trail went up there that was used by miners, stockmen and woodcutters. It is so steep that it is difficult to walk up. About 25 years ago this trail was used by dirt bikers, and they left their little metal grates in the trail tread for traction. Nobody uses it now, and it has gone back to Nature. You don't see that very often in our modern world. Like Diane Eagle's mother would say, "It's a great day in the morning," when something like that happens.

Farther up Bishop Creek an old road takes off from the Bishop Creek housing area. This is another way to access Coyote by walking. I like to go straight up from Four Jeffrey campground. It is super steep, rugged and gets into beautiful forested areas in remote side canyons. There are a lot of eroded granite formations along the way, and it has that Sierra feel to it. On one hike I came upon the Schober Mine cabin that still sits unmolested in a high, small valley overlooking the crest of the Sierra. Always show respect for the owners of these places by leaving them alone.

The next old primitive trail up the hill goes from Em's Pond to the Lindner Mine, which I wrote about in the October, 2007 edition of the *Mammoth Times*. Not far from there is the Green Lake Trail, where a road can be seen coming down to the end of the lake. Beyond that the higher elevations are reached by cross country travel or by old trails from the South Lake trailhead.

Here are a few trail tips for this area:

Never wear shorts while going cross country, or your legs will be reduced to a bloody mess by brush that bites. I have not seen any rattlers out there, but that does not mean that they aren't there.

Reduce weight and cool your sandwiches with freezable juice packs. By lunchtime, the drinks will be thawed out and your food will be in perfect condition. If the drinks don't thaw out completely, you can have a fruit slushy on a hot summer's day. It's out of sight! Remember, make sure you get the juice with no added sugar or corn sweeteners. We really do care about your good health out along the trail.

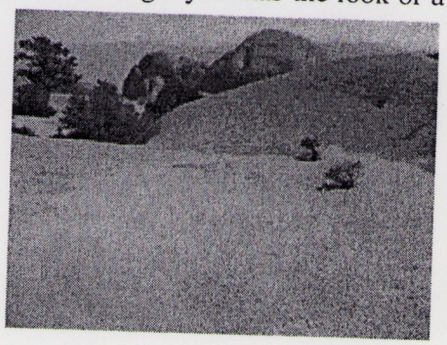
Until I write again, happy trails to you.

(David McNeill has lived in Bishop since 1974, working for the Water District and Forest Service for most of that time. At home in the wilderness, he does a lot of hiking with his Springer spaniel, Windy. And with a taste for writing that he explored during stints at Mammoth's Channel 5 and the Mono Herald, *he has a drawer full of stories.)*

Little Egypt

by Dave McNeill

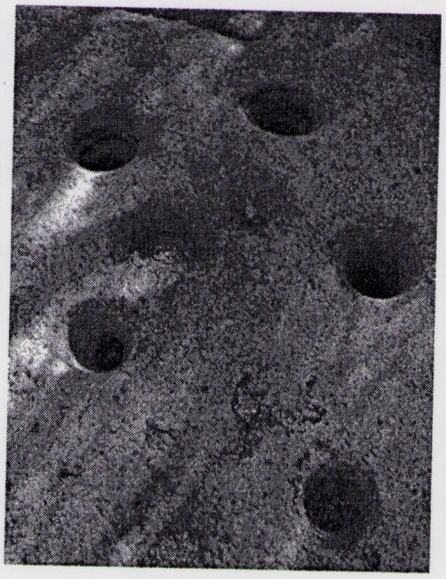
Not a more pleasant place exists on this earth than Little Egypt-not far from Bishop, California in the Eastern Sierra. This area is in the Pinyon Pine forest and is unique for its nice deer trails and eroded granite rock formations. Many of them look like small pyramids with stark white decomposed granitic sand and old gnarly Pinyon trees interspersed with large Jeffrey Pines and giant California Mahogany. It has the look of a living Japanese landscape garden.



The history of Little Egypt is interesting and the area is currently private land owned by Los Angeles. What that means is that there is no camping allowed on Department of Water and Power land. They purchased the water rights to the spring in the valley and surrounding country back in the 1930s from a farmer who was growing barley up there. He had constructed a road up a steep hillside by hand in the 1890s to get wagons into the valley. He tapped into the spring and brought water down by riveted pipe to irrigate the fields that he burned the brush off and fenced in.

Old cans and broken glass reveal the site where a couple of structures stood that have since been removed. On one occasion I had the opportunity to speak with a couple in their late eighties who remember seeing the cabins in Little Egypt. They described how during prohibition, people would come up to the cabins to drink, gamble and party with prostitutes. Little Egypt has its share of ghostly mysteries both historical and archeological.

This hanging valley that was cut off by a lateral glacial moraine was truly the premiere late summer and fall Pinyon pine nut gathering and hunting spot for the native people. There is evidence of their presence everywhere in the valley from rock rings (shelter sites), bedrock mortars, metates (grinding dish), manos (grinding stones), arrowheads, rock shelters and super-beautiful campsites.



A lot of wood was harvested from the hillsides all around Little Egypt and piles of cord wood can still be found that were never retrieved. In more modern times they drove Jeeps and trucks to the far end of the valley and cut some huge Jeffrey trees. One of the remaining mongo-Jeffrey trees still stands, because it was too big to cut down with a DBH (diameter at breast height) of nearly nine feet. The road has all but disappeared since the 1980 earthquake brought down large boulders and blocked off access by motor vehicles. Now the road is a nice trail that makes for an easy one-mile walk. Sometimes nature imposes its own restrictions on what type of use there is going to be in our modern world.

The farmer carved his initials H.E.S., 1896, on a couple of trees at his corner boundary post on top of the moraine. He also chiseled it into a rock that is next to a granite bedrock mortar that the Indians used. They were up there at the same time and may have found work from the farmer. 1896 is a very early date for someone to be farming at this remote location. The valley of Little Egypt gets hot and is somewhat protected from wind. It slopes down slightly and was perfect for gravity flow irrigation. It is hard to tell that anything was there as one looks at it today.

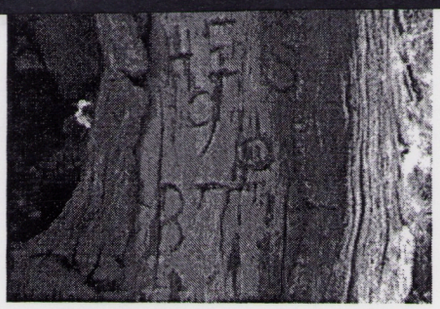
Most of the hiking up out of the valley is on steep, sandy slopes. It is not too hard to get into tight spots in the cliffs and one has to be careful and sometimes back track to get out. It is very beautiful and the views out over Bishop are astounding. Everywhere are photo opportunities and things to discover and explore. It is best to stay up high on the slopes to avoid getting sucked down into deep ravines.

From Little Egypt it is possible to keep hiking up into the Coyote Mountains and gain high elevations in the Sierra-like peaks. The most pleasant zone is in the 7,000-9,000 foot level in the Pinyon and Limber Pine zones where the birds incessantly chatter.

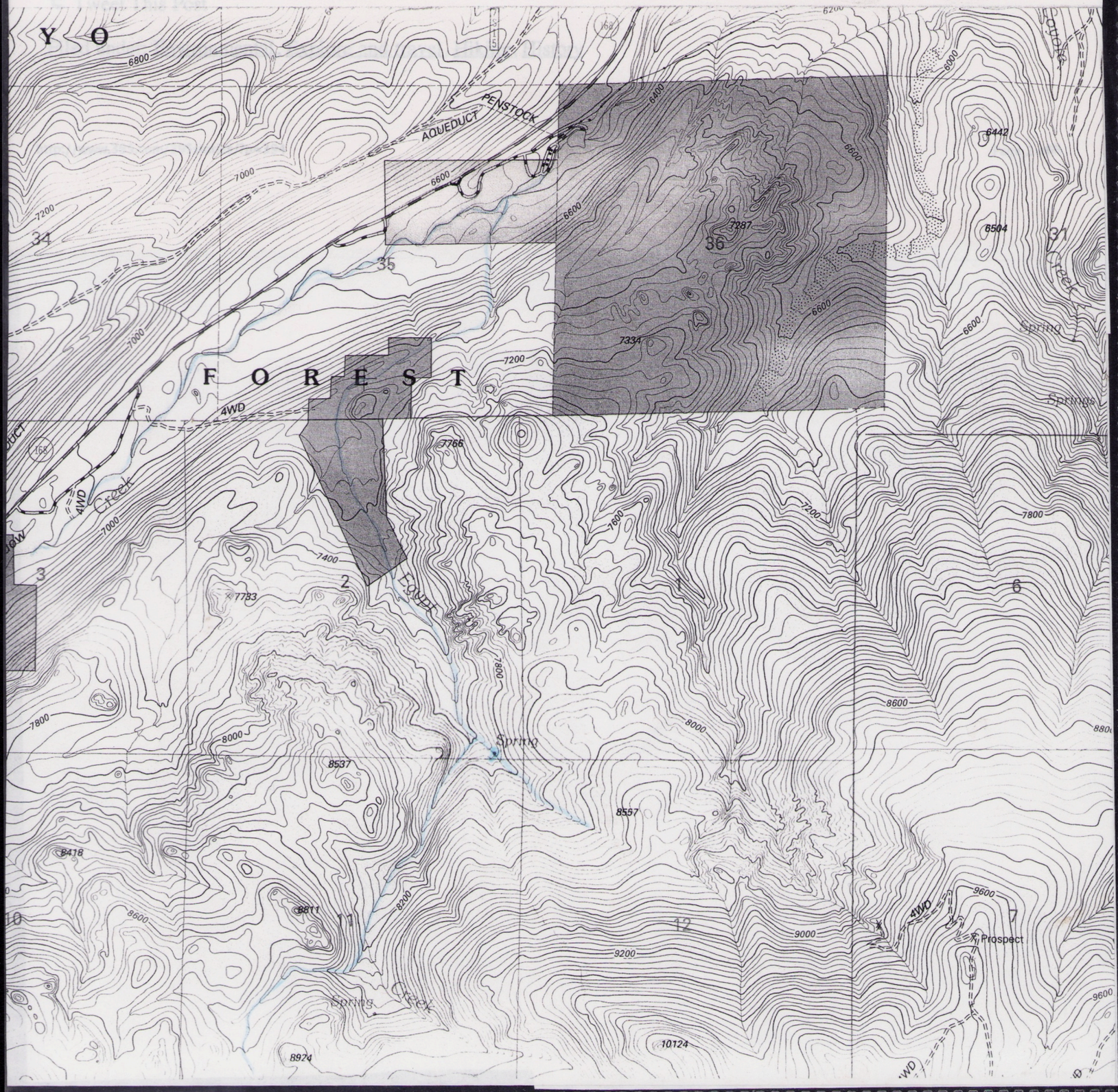
OVER

OVER

Little Egypt can be accessed ten miles west of Bishop on Hwy 168. Turn left at the Bitterbrush campground entrance. Drive one tenth of a mile and make another left onto a short, dirt road that goes down to Bishop Creek. Park above the creek, wade across in low water with old tennis shoes, and walk to the left to the base of the slope. Look for the old road/trail and you are on your way to "walk like and Egyptian." If the creek is too high to ford, drive back down the highway a couple of miles to the power plant and cross below the intake dam. A small trail goes up from there to the lower part of Little Egypt, where rock climbers often venture.



This is one of those secret spots, intrepid explorer, and you didn't hear it from me!

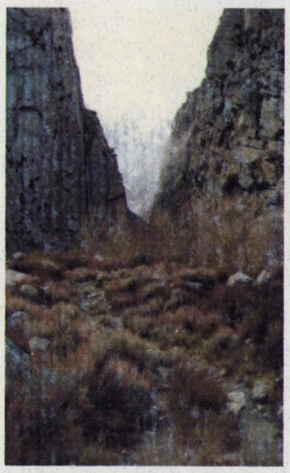


Pine Creek Crags Trail

Estimated Hiking Distance: About 1 mile one way.

Difficulty: Easy to moderate.

Land Manager: Inyo National Forest, White Mountain District.



Views: Great view of Pine Creek Crags which is located in a narrow high walled slot canyon. Scenic vistas of White Mountain Peak from mouth of canyon.

Directions to Trailhead: Take U.S. Highway 395 north about 10 miles from Bishop Chamber of Commerce to Pine Creek Road. Turn west or left on Pine Creek Road. Proceed 8 miles from this turn. You will pass the Rovana community as you head into Pine Creek Canyon. At the 8 mile mark, you will see a narrow high walled canyon to your right. A small parking area is located just past the canyon on the right side of the road. Park here and hike up the narrow 4 wheel drive route which heads uphill and easterly toward the mouth of the canyon. The route narrows into a single track hiking trail near the canyon entrance. Note the rock climbing bolts anchored up the steep granite wall. This canyon challenges rock climbers to scale this sheer ascent with few handholds.
The trail goes up a few hundred yards further where it disappears. This is a good place to consider turning back because it then becomes a scramble across boulders to continue up the canyon.

Pleasant Valley Gorge Trail

Estimated Hiking Distance: About 3 miles one way.

Difficulty: Easy

Land Manager: City of Los Angeles, Department of Water and Power.

Views: This scenic gorge has been deeply cut by the Owens River over hundreds of thousands of years. It was built in the 1950's to be used as a reservoir by the City of Los Angeles. It is very popular with anglers. The trail itself is a paved road where vehicles are prohibited leaving the road accessible to hikers, fishermen, and bicyclists. The canyon walls are several hundred feet above the canyon floor. This is also a pleasant route for mountain biking.

Directions to Trailhead: Drive north from Bishop about 6.5 miles to the Pleasant Valley Reservoir Road. Turn right or east and follow the paved road 2.3 miles to the barricade where all vehicles must park. Park your vehicle here and proceed on foot up the paved road north towards the Pleasant Valley earthen dam. The road will climb above the dam and level off in the canyon itself where you get a view of the reservoir. The paved road terminates at a small power plant located a few miles from the dam.

Bishop Area Winter Hiking Trails

12/2012

The Druid Stones Trail

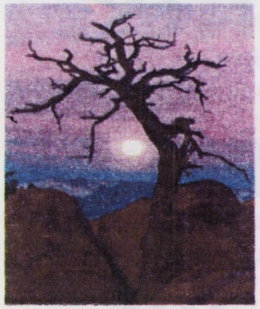
Estimated Hiking Distance: About 2-3 miles one way.

Difficulty: Strenuous with mostly uphill hiking and some scrambling. Approximately 2000 ft. elevation gain from the trailhead.

Land Manager: Inyo National Forest, White Mountain Ranger District.

Views: Outstanding views of northern Owens Valley including White Mountain Peak, the Volcanic Tableland, the Owens River, and the White Mountains.

This hike is along a well-worn trail which leads to the Druid Stones Bouldering Area which contains large granite rock formations with spectacular views along the way overlooking the Owens Valley.



Directions to Trailhead: From US 395 (Main Street) in Bishop, take West Line St. west to the Sierra. After a mile or so, turn left (south) at the Barlow Lane stoplight onto Barlow Lane. Drive about 1.5 miles past the subdivision and turn right onto Bir Road. The road curves west at this point. Drive about 1.75 miles and after the second gray steel powerline, look for a dirt road that goes to the left. Park along the shoulder of Bir Road. Walk on the dirt road south about 0.25 miles, then turn right toward the trailhead. Take the obvious trail as it goes back into the wash then switchbacks left up around the hillside. After a few miles, the trail flattens out on the crest, then look for the boulders on your left. There is a side trail into the boulders off the main trail marked by a small rock 'V' at the fork (please use this trail).

The trail continues beyond the Druid Bouldering Area into adjoining Coyote Country for longer hiking opportunities.

Lower Rock Creek Trail

Estimated Hiking Distance: About 7 miles one way.

Difficulty: Easy to Moderate.

Land Managers: U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Bishop Field Office & Inyo National Forest, White Mountain Ranger District.

Views: Scenic views of a narrow, incised canyon cut by Lower Rock Creek. The trail contains old growth ponderosa pine and clusters of rhyolitic volcanic columns similar to those at Devil's Postpile. This trail is popular with mountain bikers, fishermen, and hikers.

There are several access points to the trail. At the top end, it begins (or ends if you hike up from the bottom access points) at the upper Lower Rock Creek Road turnoff right next to U.S. Highway 395. The trail then traverses down to the bottom paralleling Lower Rock Creek the entire distance.

Directions to Paradise Trailhead aka the Bottom End of the Trail: Take U.S. Highway 395 approximately 10 miles north from Bishop Chamber of Commerce to the Pine Creek Road. Turn left onto Pine Creek Road.

After a few hundred feet, turn right on Lower Rock Creek Road (Old Sherwin Grade Road). Drive 5 miles to a hairpin curve. Look for trailhead parking/picnic area on right side of road.

On foot, walk on road shoulder to east side of private residence and take paved road north along the east side of creek to bridge crossing. Cross bridge to west side of creek. Follow trail past BLM kiosk to northern terminus at upper end of Lower Rock Creek Road. This is a popular fishing and mountain bike trail so watch for bikers on blind corners.

Happy Boulders Trail

Estimated Hiking Distance: About 1-2 miles one way.

Difficulty: Easy

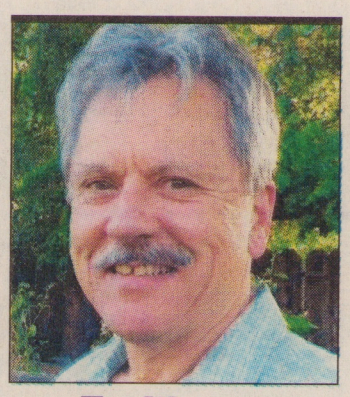
Land Manager: U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Bishop Field Office & City of Los Angeles, Department of Water and Power.

Views: Happy Boulders is located in a dogleg shaped canyon at the southern edge of the Volcanic Tableland. As you head up into the canyon, southern views of the Owens Valley, White Mountains, and the Sierra Nevada are breathtaking. As you traverse further up into the canyon, many house sized boulders from the canyon walls have fractured and tumbled down onto the canyon floor. This area is one of the world's most popular bouldering areas. Watch climbers use spider like moves to access the tops of boulders.

This is a great place to take young children to play hide and seek among the contorted and twisted boulders which form a maze of obstacles throughout the canyon floor.

Directions to Trailhead: Take U.S. Highway 6 from Bishop Chamber of Commerce north about 2-3 miles to Five Bridges Road. Take a left and follow this paved road to the 3 way road junction. Take the far left county dirt road known as Chalk Bluff Road.
Drive about 2-2.5 miles on Chalk Bluff Road to the parking area with a porta-potty on the left and large shoulder parking area. Park here and the trail begins at the west side of the canyon as you look north. Look for the trailhead sign. Follow the trail uphill for about 20 minutes into the Happy Boulders Bouldering area where dozens of boulders line the canyon bottom. You can hike to the end of the canyon just below the private residence.

Feasting on power



TED WILLIAMS
COLUMNIST

The tranquil streams of Bishop Creek Canyon belie the powerful economic impact they had on Nevada and California in the early 1900s.

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But practical use of electricity was in its infancy. Just a few decades earlier those who consumed it had to live close to power generators. For miners in the Western deserts, that was a problem.

At the turn of the century, in the American Southwest, isolated mining operations began incorporating the use of small fuel-based generators.

But fuel was expensive to buy and transport, so scaling a mining operation was cost prohibitive.

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Such was the case for Tonopah and Goldfield, Nev., in the late 1800s.

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Old steam engine technology relied on water that was locally scarce, boiled with dwindling wood supplies and expensive coal; these boom towns threatened to go bust.

But that was about to change after the arrival of two men from Colorado.

Backed by Denver investors in 1904, hydraulic engineer Loren Curtis and former railroad official Charles Hobbs traveled to Goldfield and Tonopah with their "grubstake" money to purchase mining claims.

The profitable claims were gone, but they quickly realized that expansion of Tonopah and Goldfield had reached its limit without a cheap source of power.

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When he arrived, a small hydro-generator was already supplying electricity to the Bishop Light and Power Company.

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The group quickly assembled $300,000, and on Dec. 31, 1904, the Nevada Power, Mining and Milling Co. was formed.

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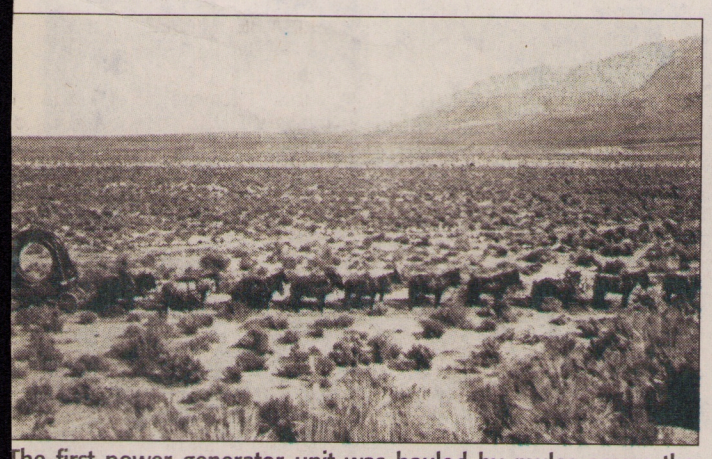
Photo courtesy Laws Museum collection



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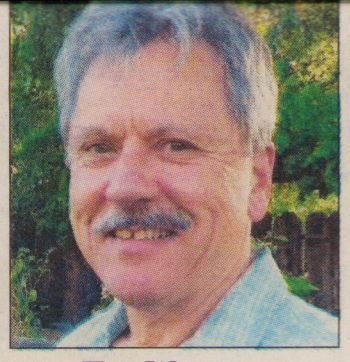

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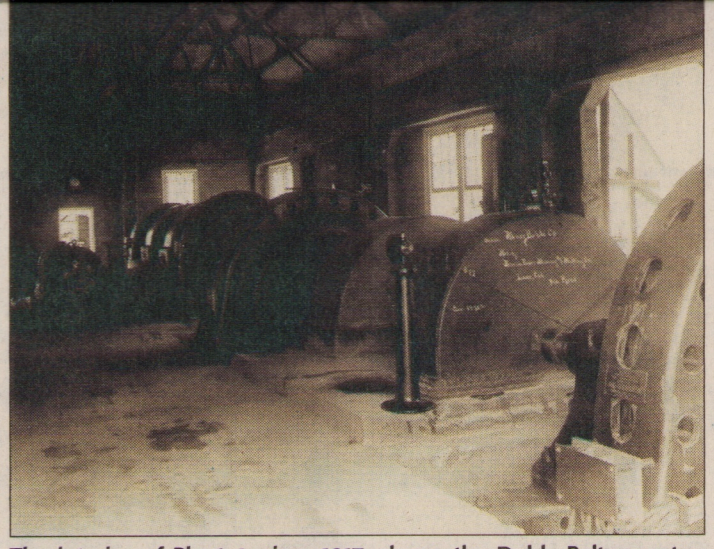

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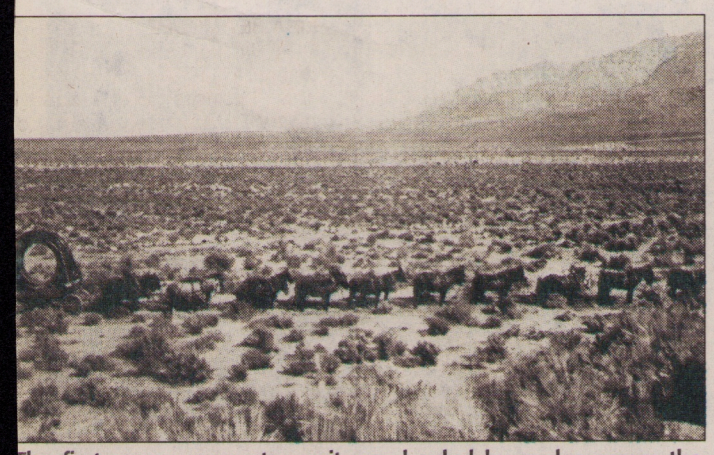

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Photo courtesy Laws Museum collection

The sign reads, "Office of Bishop Light and Power Company," circa 1910, before the business was taken over in 1914 by the Nevada-California Power Company.

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Teamsters haul the second power generator unit, on the heels of the first, to Plant 4 on Bishop Creek. Both units came by rail to the Laws railroad station in 1905.

Photo courtesy Laws Museum collection

Happily roaming in the foothills

were heading westbound on Highway 168 towards Bishop Creek Canyon. Instead of driving all the way up the road, we turned right on Ed Powers Road and then a left on the first dirt road that veered west. A couple hundred feet later I parked in a turnout on the left, approximately a mile and a half east of the Little Tungsten Hills.

Just like every other hike recently, it was very cold with a stiff wind blowing from west to east. The good news was that the sky was clear of clouds and there was no precipitation in the forecast, which was perfect hiking weather for us. We started out by walking on a dirt road for a few hundred feet, crossed a creek on a perfectly placed rock and entered a sage-covered landscape dampened by the previous days' rain.

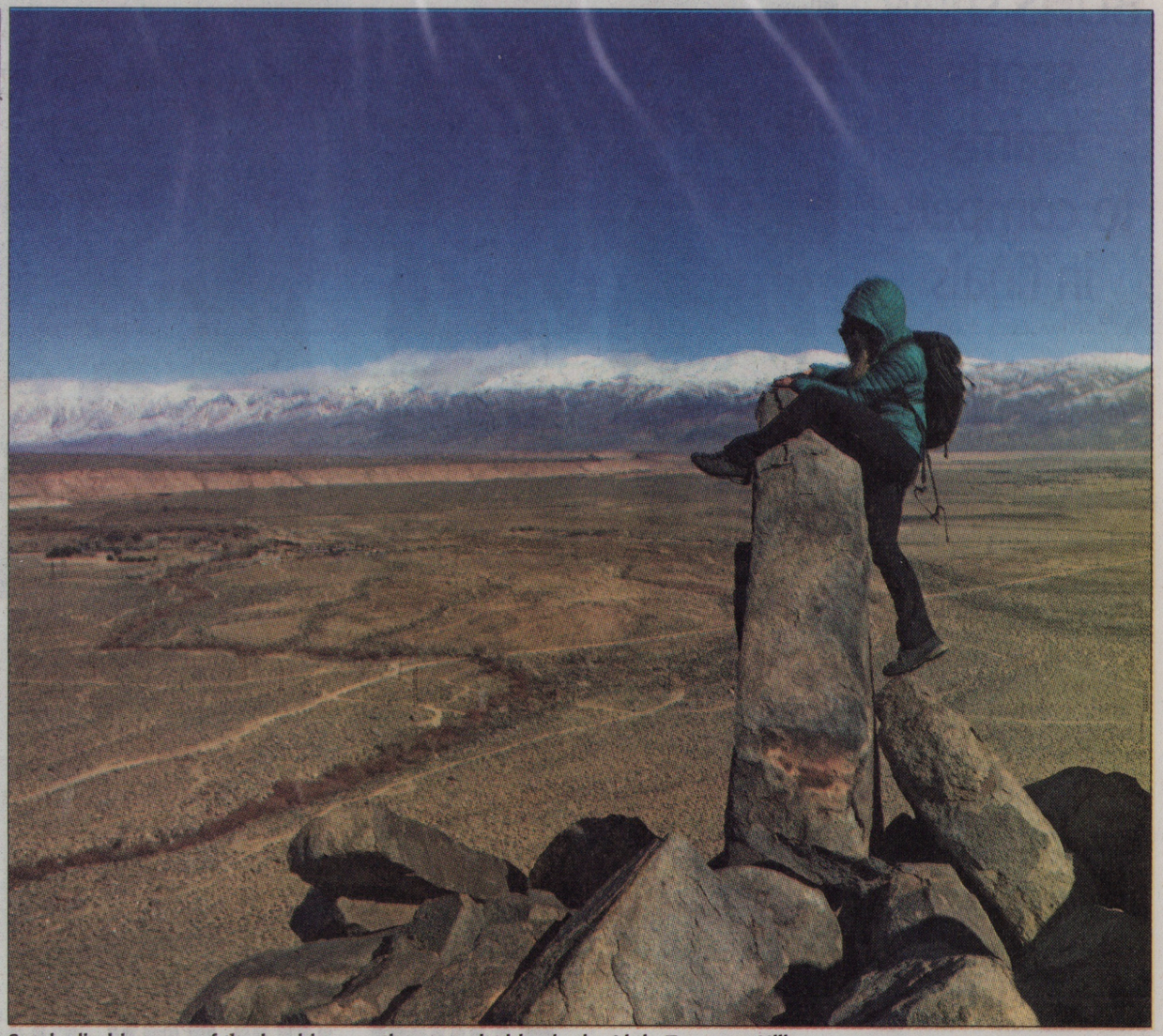
Back in the day before miners discovered tungsten in Pine Creek Canyon, and built the largest tungsten mine in the world (at that time), fortune-seekers began their quest in the Tungsten Hills and Buttermilk Country. During the heyday in the hills west of Bishop, mines were scattered throughout the area, evidenced by abandoned shafts dotting some of the south-facing slopes. Presently, all the miners are long gone, and the tunnels either boarded up or armed with "no trespassing" signs, but the hiking and exploring in these areas is a perfect remedy to any ailment.

Once the creek was crossed, Sarah and I continued westbound towards the southernmost portion of the Little Tungsten Hills, where we planned on starting up the slope to the first summit ridgeline. Before we got there though, another creek was encountered and was a little tougher to cross, but we found an ice-free rock to step on and crossed with ease.

I was already having a great time with Sarah, yet the real adventure was about to begin. We started up the steep south ridge, initially marching uphill in some heavy duty loose dirt, prior to reaching the first rocky ridgeline. The views all around immediately started opening up, allowing us to see clearly for miles in all directions. As usual on our hikes recently, Sarah headed straight for some huge boulders and started climbing, until the father in me came out and told her not to get hurt so "I don't have to carry your a** outta here."

After stopping to check out an old summit marker with the words "Little Tungsten" on it, we continued north along the rocky ridgeline to the high-point, less than half a mile away. Sarah's excitement was contagious as we scrambled up and over some very large boulders and dodged a handful of pointy bushes along the way, eventually arriving at the 5,331 foot summit. For almost an hour Sarah and I took in all the vistas around us while hungrily eating some fruit and sandwiches, meanwhile having a great conversation about each other's love for the mountains.

It was still early in the day (noon) when we left the high-point of the Little Tungsten Hills, beginning the second half of the loop while descending down to another saddle below. Four more small summits were reached in the next two hours, as well as a very cool mine area, each spot encountered equally as fun and exciting as the last.



Sarah climbing one of the boulders on the summit ridge in the Little Tungsten Hills.

Photo by Craig Jackson

(Craig Jackson is a Bishop resident and avid hiker/backpacker who enjoys exploring his new backyard after having relocated here in 2013 from Southern California. Email him at Sierracj51@gmail.com.)

Not valid with other discounts or coupons. Available at the Bishop store.

While I explored the canyon wall above the creek, Barri found the perfect spot to relax and reflect.

and that was the highlight of the hike described below.

Unlike the east side of the Tungsten Hills, the west end is less visited and therefore, appears to be more wild. It's proximity to Mt. Tom and Basin Mountain, two miles to the west and separated by south Round Valley, offer great hiking and impeccable scenery. There are a few mountain bike trails that criss-cross the landscape on the west side of the Tungsten Hills, but most of the fun can be had by simply wandering.

Earlier this month my friend Barri had an actual day off and wanted to go for a hike, and I decided a stroll through Round Valley and the west Tungsten Hills would be perfect on that particular day. It was 9 a.m. on a beautiful Eastern Sierra morning when Barri and I met up at the entrance to Horton Creek Campground, just west of Bishop. We had previously hooked up here a handful of times in the past and had great hikes in Round Valley and on Mt. Tom, but this time we headed in a different direction to explore parts unknown. Within a few minutes after arriving, we were on our way, crossing Horton Creek and entering a sage-covered landscape.

The route-finding in Round Valley and the Tungsten Hills is pretty straight forward, simply pick a point on the horizon and start hiking in that direction. We took our time walking through the easy part, while having a nice conversation and enjoying the 360-degree views. An hour after leaving the trailhead, the simple part of the hike was over and the real fun began.

At this point, we reached the base of the west Tungsten Hills and immediately started heading in an uphill direction. There's a large rounded hill at the western-most point, with a nice canyon on the other side. We rounded the north side and promptly spotted a creek coming down the canyon. It was a shock to me personally, having been in this spot a couple of times in the past and never seeing water.

For the next mile, we followed a seldom-used bike trail steeply up the canyon, right above the creek on the left. At the top of the short canyon, Barri and I stopped and took a long break amongst the pumice stones and large boulders, a few short feet from the clear running stream. Water that comes right out of the ground just amazes me for some reason, so I had to check it out.

Following a nice hour break, we continued up the canyon and landed on another rarely-used bike trail. There was still some snow near the Tungsten Hills high point, but only dirt to be walked on beneath our boots. It was a lot of fun following the canyon back towards the west and Round Valley, but first we climbed a rock hill for one of the best views of Mt. Tom I have ever seen.

It took another hour or so of wandering to get back to Horton Creek Campground, where we found a great spot to sit down and take a break before departing. We both concluded that today was another one of those good days in the eastern Sierra, filled with good times and great memories.

(Craig Jackson is a Bishop resident and avid hiker/backpacker

CRAIG JACKSON
COLUMNIST

Two hikes in one day

Snow-covered North Lake Road, which leads to the Piute Pass and Lamarck Lakes trailhead.

Photo by Craig Jackson

(Hiked on April 18, 2020)

The last time I actually saw North Lake it was last October on a beautiful fall day in the Sierra Nevada. I had enjoyed an annual hike to Piute Pass and Muriel Lake, and although it seems like it was last week, it's actually been a long six months since. I was very anxious and determined to see North Lake again, although I had a feeling it might still be covered in snow, but the only way to know was to go for a hike. And that's exactly what we did.

Two days before the beginning of the current heat wave, three friends of mine and I made plans for a nice hike in the Sierra from Aspendell to North Lake. It was quite cold on the morning of our hike with a slight chance of precipitation, and the four of us were equally thrilled about the day ahead.

Driving up from Bishop in three separate vehicles, the four of us met in Aspendell at the locked gate on SR168, promptly at 8 a.m. Thankfully, the closed portion of the road was snow-free, making for a pleasant walk for the first mile. We turned right at the signed junction for North Lake, crossed over Bishop Creek on a one lane bridge and immediately encountered snow. The easy walking was over.

There were no previous boot tracks in the 6 to 12 inches of snow on the road, meaning we had to forge along, postholing with practically every step. It was fun, although at one point I felt slightly frustrated, but that feeling would come to and end quickly near the pack station. We found an ideal spot to hang out, talk about life and admire the scenery all around.

Believe it or not it actually started to slightly snow on us, prompting a quick retreat back down North Lake Road. Not long after that we were back at our cars and ready to go. We said our goodbyes and see ya laters from at least six feet apart, and within seconds we went our separate ways.

It was a little before 2 p.m. the same day when I got home and settled in for a nice meal, then I got a text from Sarah. She was heading out for a an afternoon walk north of Bishop and wondered if I was interested in joining her. Without hesitation, I said YES! It took about a minute and a half for me to change clothes and get ready. We met up within minutes and started walking northbound on Fish Slough Road, and let me tell you it was a lot warmer than it was in the morning. I was having such an amazing time wandering in the Volcanic Tablelands that I didn't realize it was three hours later than when we started.

It would end up being a 16 mile day of hiking, starting in the snow and ending in the desert. Another typically wonderful day in the Eastern Sierra.

(Craig Jackson is a Bishop resident and avid hiker/backpacker who enjoys exploring his new backyard after having relocated here in 2013 from Southern California. Email him at Sierracj51@gmail.com.)

Wheeler Crest. It had been about six years since I was on the ridge and Round Valley Peak, so it was time to get back up there. Luckily for me, Sarah had a day off on the same day I did and would be joining me for the hike.

It was exactly 6:36 a.m. on a Wednesday morning when we departed Bishop and headed north for 24 miles to Rock Creek Road and turned left. The scenic morning drive up Rock Creek Canyon was delightful as usual. Just to the left of the Rock Creek Resort, we turned left to Rock Creek Lake and encountered a closed gate, where we parked and started our hike.

To get to the actual beginning of the hike, the Tamarack Bench Trail, we first had to walk along the narrow old road that borders the east side of Rock Creek Lake for a quarter mile to the empty campground next to the trailhead. We said goodbye to Rock Creek Lake and started up the rocky trail, enjoying the early morning air and quaking aspens in action.

Hiking the Round Valley Peak area offers stunning views of a wide variety of terrain.

Photo by Craig Jackson

Less than two miles in, we left the road/trail and turned right towards Dorothy Lake and Tamarack Lake. It was an incredibly beautiful morning in the Sierra Nevada and we were the only two people out there enjoying it minute by minute. The undulating path took us through verdant meadows, in between tall trees and around medium-size boulders in the shade.

We were having such a good time that I didn't realize we were already at our left turn for Dorothy Lake. The sun was starting to warm us up slightly, a perfect way to begin a nice climb up a steep slope.

After a very relaxing break under a massive tree, a few feet away from Dorothy Lake's east shore, Sarah and I began the climb up to Wheeler Crest. It's only about a mile to the ridge above, but the loose rock and slanted slope made it an adventure.

The view from Wheeler Crest is one for the archives, with the massive Owens Valley and White Mountains to the east, the Sierra Crest to the west and miles of wilderness to the north. We were at the low point, clearly visible from Bishop, and started hiking vibrantly in a northern direction. Our original goal was Round Valley Peak, but we instead headed directly to what looked like a higher point just left of it.

There was a beautiful sky above us, with some nice white clouds creeping in from the west. We spent at least two hours on top of Peak 11980, doing what we love to do the most.

(Craig Jackson is a Bishop resident and avid hiker/backpacker who enjoys exploring his new backyard after having relocated here in 2013 from Southern California. Email him at Sierracj51@gmail.com.)

hiking in Round Valley

(Hiked on Dec. 25)
2014

With relatives in town for the holidays and a cold, but clear, forecast predicted for Christmas Day, I made plans for a morning hike, before the day's festivities would begin. My son Kevin had driven up from Orange County the day before and my brother Mark arrived from Minden, Nev. the same day in his Dodge 4 x 4.

I've been hiking in Round Valley near Horton Creek during the winter months and have been curious where the road through the campground went. Unfortunately, I only have a two-wheel drive and am very skeptical driving on a rough roads. From the entrance to the campground, the road to the mine site is barely visible as it heads in a northerly direction ascending moderately up the southeast side of Mount Tom.

I presented the idea to my brother and son and after some coffee and a small breakfast, we were on our way from Bishop to Round Valley early Christmas morning. We left town and headed north on U.S. Highway 395 for about five miles and made a left turn onto Sawmill Road. A few hundred feet later, we turned right on South Round Valley Road and drove a few miles, passing the fire station on the right. Two miles later we turned left on Horton Creek Road towards the campground. Presently, there is a sign at this intersection stating "Campground Closed."

We drove up the road, in my brother's four-wheel drive, to the entrance to the campground and stayed to the right going from pavement to dirt road. If driving anything other than a four-wheel drive vehicle, I suggest parking here and hiking the six miles to the mine because the road is very rocky in spots requiring extra traction.

We stayed on the main dirt road as it bumped and bounced over rocks to some overhead power lines less than a mile from the entrance. We turned left and then made a quick right heading south. There are 49 campsites that are clearly numbered in the campground. We turned right onto the dirt road next to campsite #31, which put us on the main road out of the campground. If you stay on the main road, bypassing the right turn at site #31, you will end up on the same road also.

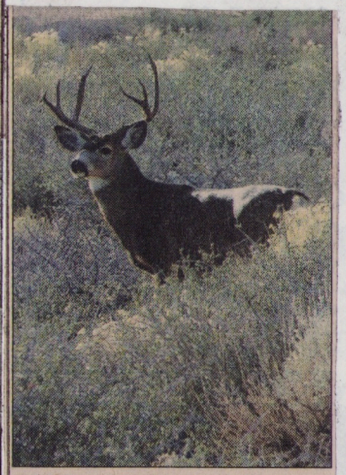
Stay on the main road at all times as it makes its way out into Round Valley in a southwest direction. Encounter a couple of roads on the left heading towards Horton Creek but stay on the obvious main dirt road. After 3.8 miles of bouncing and bumping across Round Valley, we arrived at the base of Mount Tom and parked in one of the few spots available.

We started hiking up the old mining road as it moderately ascends up towards the mine. The views of Round Valley, the Owens River Gorge, the White Mountains and Buttermilk Country are outstanding as the road keeps climbing.

In less than two miles, we arrived at the mine site at the end of the road. We then climbed up through some brush and emerged at the mine shaft, which still has some ore car tracks intact and other artifacts. We spent an hour or so climbing around the area exploring and enjoying the crisp air and spectacular views. When we started heading back down the road, we saw a small herd of mule deer grazing just below the road. We watched them for a few minutes before getting back to the truck and heading back to Bishop for Mom's delicious dinner. In my opinion, the best way to spend a Christmas morning.

AT A GLANCE:

- Very cold out, bring warm clothes and especially gloves.
- Four-mile round-trip hike with 4-wheel drive vehicle; 12 miles round trip if parked at campground.
- Old mine, stay out of shaft.
- Watch for patches of ice on trail.
- Wildlife sighting possibilities.



A big buck in Round Valley near the trail.

A mule deer in Round Valley on Christmas Day.

Mark Jackson enjoys the view while trying to stay warm.

Tungsten Peak

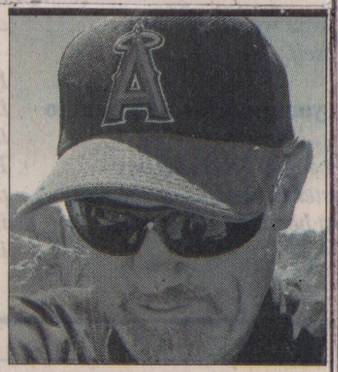
(Most recently hiked on Dec. 14)
2014

One of the many great things about living in Bishop is the unlimited amount of hiking opportunities throughout the year. The summer months are primarily spent enjoying the trails in the Sierra Nevada while the cold winter days are mostly spent in the foothills of the Sierra, the White Mountains, the Owens River area or anywhere else that is snow-free.

One of my favorite places to wander this time of year is in the Tungsten Hills, just west of town near Millpond Park. There are a myriad of dirt roads in the area that are perfect for hiking, biking, horseback riding, off-roading or just taking a nice leisurely stroll. There's also plenty of mining history dotting the hillsides of the many peaks in the area, perfect for the history buff or the neophyte like myself.

While the Tungsten Hills may be somewhat dwarfed by their much larger neighbor to the west, they are highly worthwhile to visit and explore. The name of the Tungsten Hills comes from the tungsten that was mined here, beginning during World War I and continuing until the early '50s. There are many minor peaks to bag, but the one with possibly the best view and a discernible trail to the top is Tungsten Peak (5,930 feet). It is a short, steep trail over Class 1 terrain with outstanding views and incredible geological features with bouldering opportunities for those looking for that kind of fun.

To get to the main trailhead from Bishop, head north on U.S. Highway 395 for just a few miles and then take a left on Ed Powers Road. Within a few hundred feet, make a right on Sawmill Road heading in a westerly direction. Past the entrance to Millpond Park, make a left turn at the second dirt road and after 0.1 miles make a right. Travel straight ahead for a half-mile then make a left with another left after 0.9 miles from the road. Another 0.1 miles and make a right a little farther up to the circular trailhead parking area. High-clearance 2- and 4-wheel drive vehicles should have no problem making it to the trailhead, but if you feel skeptical, park back at the road and hike up to the trailhead.



CRAIG JACKSON
COLUMNIST

From the trailhead, pass the sign marked "Tungsten Peak Trailhead" and follow the trail as it heads steeply up a rocky canyon on the right side of a dry creek. Easy to follow, the loose and sandy trail heads upwards to a wash at the top of the canyon.

Once at the top after 0.2 miles, the trail direction gets a little tricky here. Look for rocks on the ground guiding you left and onto some granite slabs. Hike just a few feet on the slabs then make a sharp left turn and look for the trail as it heads steeply uphill to the top of the ridge on the left.

From the top of the ridge, continue in a more open and straightforward southwest direction on a well-defined path to the low-point on the high ridge ahead. The trail is moderately steep as it gains another ridgeline after 0.8 miles. The views of the Owens Valley, the White Mountains, the Owens River Gorge and everywhere else are spectacular from here. Also, the huge boulders are very colorful and fun to climb on or hike around.

After 1.1 total miles and almost 1,300 feet of elevation gain, reach the rocky summit. Sign the register and enjoy the incredible all-around views before returning to the trailhead.

AT A GLANCE:

- Steep, short trail with amazing views
- Bouldering and exploring opportunities
- Half-day hike
- Cold breezes; take warm clothes
- 2.2 miles round trip, 1,300-foot gain

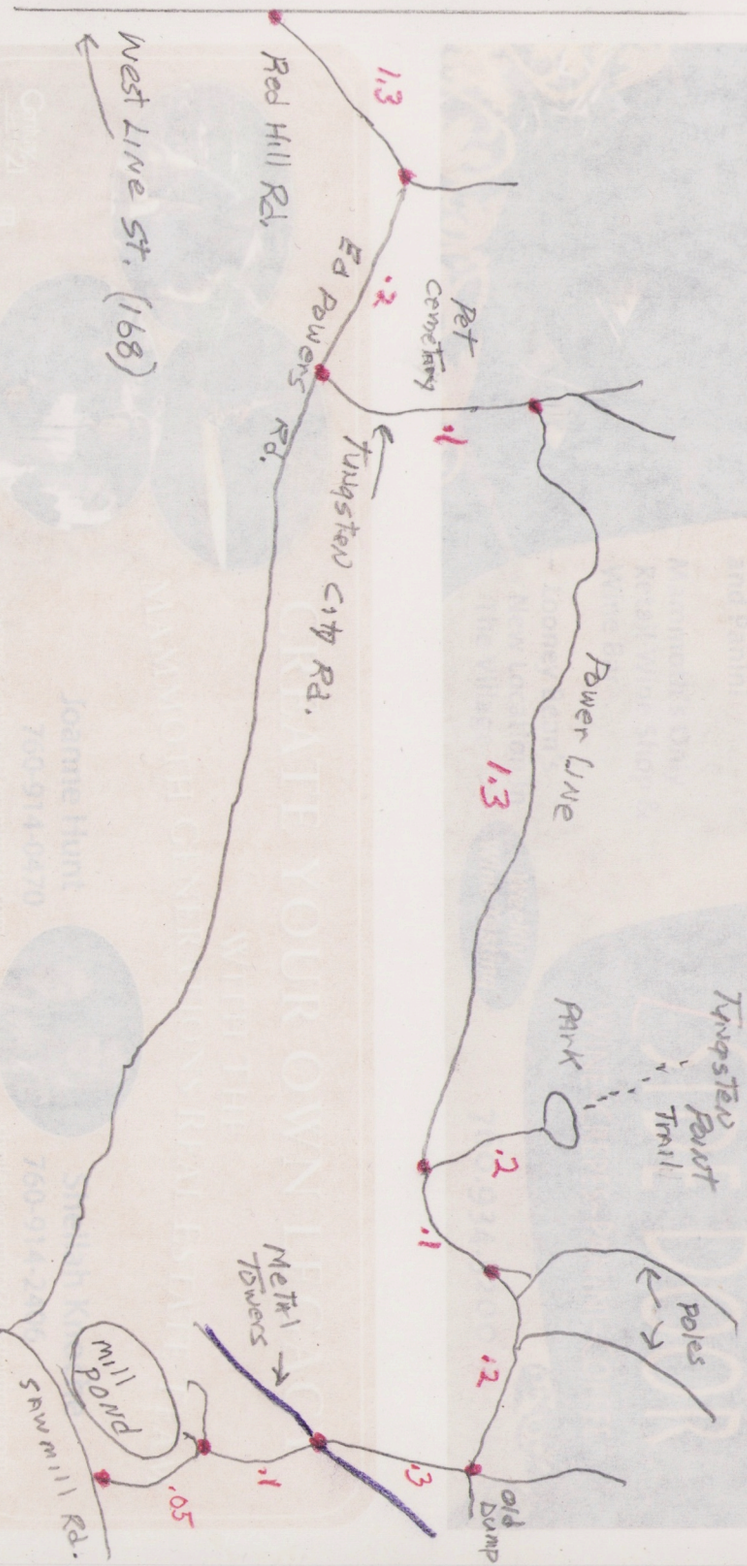
The beginning of the scenic hike to Tungsten Peak.

Boulders alongside the trail below the summit of Tungsten Peak.

2001

Tungsten triumph

On Saturday, Oct. 20, Ed Zdon of Bishop made his 1,000th ascent of the tallest peak in the Tungsten Hills near Bishop. Known only as an elevation point on the map, this little-known trail has become Ed's favorite therapeutic hike. After open-heart surgery in the early 90s, he began walking the many roads north of Bishop. Growing bored with the monotony of graded routes, Ed upped the ante and discovered that mountain climbing is not only good for the body, but good for the soul. At 74-years-old, Zdon makes the trek about three times a week and has been at it for about seven years. Rich Williams, a Park Ranger for the Bureau of Land Management, hiked with Ed and his family that Saturday, and "lucky for us he stopped often so we could catch our breath," Williams said. "At the top we were treated to coffee and donuts that Ed pulled from his backpack, a much-needed sugar rush to help my still-rubbery legs. Ed's energy for life can be read by the sparkle on his face. He overcame the odds. He lives with a zeal and zest some of us have lost. Thank you Ed, you have shown us that even ordinary things can become extraordinary." Mr. Zdon's son, Andy, has authored an extensive guide book on Eastern Sierra peaks. *Photo courtesy BLM*



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FEATURED HIKE AN "EZ" HIKE IN THE TUNGSTEN HILLS

BY STACY CORLESS

Many great things are born from necessity, and the Tungsten Point trail is one such thing.

In late winter and early spring, the hiker, eager for dirt, is forced down to the lumpy, brown hills just north of Bishop, resigned to fire roads and dirt bike tracks lined with rusted cans and shotgun shells.

But above the old trash heap, beyond the whoop-dee-doos, there's a pleasant surprise: a neat, feet-only route to the hills' highest point.

Ed Zdon, 78, crafted this trail out of necessity sixteen years ago. Since then, he's hiked the trail over 1,300 times.

Recently retired and newly-arrived in Bishop, Zdon had just undergone quadruple bypass heart surgery in 1990. The once avid mountain climber (he and his sons had bagged Southern California peaks such as San Jacinto and Baldy) wanted to stay active but at lower altitude than the nearby Sierra allowed.

So he and some buddies took to ambling through the Tungsten Hills. Up one sage-and-sand choked gulley after another, struggling to gain a ridge, in search of the ideal route to Tungsten Point, at 5,951 feet, officially marked by the U.S. Geological Survey as the apex of the mini-range tucked beneath Mounts Tom and Humphreys on the Sierra's eastern edge.

Pretty soon, they had a path.

The trail and Ed start out unassuming—narrow and leggy, not sure they belong in a magazine. "It's a use trail," Ed explains, not maintained by the Bureau of Land Management, the agency that oversees this chunk of dirt. But the "foot traffic only" sign that marks the start of Ed's eponymous route hints that the BLM doesn't mind it at all.

Without that sign, a hiker could miss the route barely clinging to the right side of a narrow wash. Quickly, the going gets up, and Ed points out where, one time, he fell, and his knee met the sharp side of a coyote-size boulder, earning him more than a dozen stitches. He also shows where he and his friends placed a friendlier boulder to minimize scrambling as the trail continues to ascend the wash. Ed deftly hops from rock to rock before passing through a decomposed granite doorway onto a plateau—a good place for spotting hawks.

The trail veers left, switchbacking up a ridge instead of continuing into yet another gulley. Ed bends down to remove an unstable rock from his path. Five years ago, he celebrated his thousandth time "up the hill," as he says. There was much fanfare for the thousandth hike, including a story in the local newspaper.

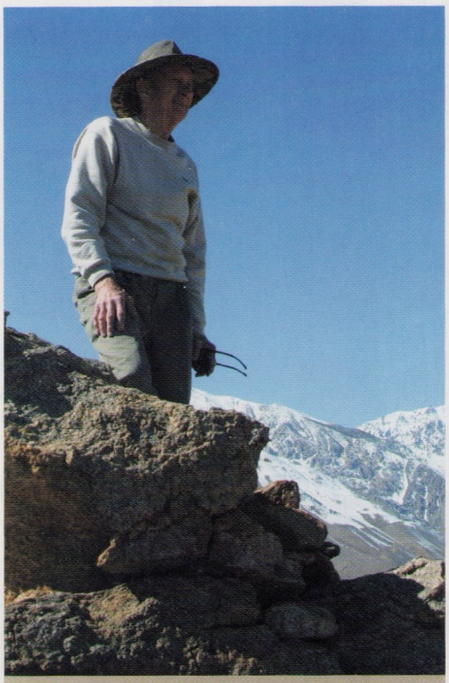


PHOTO: STACY CORLESS

THE "ED ZDON" TRAIL TO TUNGSTEN POINT

ELEVATION GAIN: 1,300 feet

TRAILHEAD: accessible via a dirt road approximately 1.5 miles west of Millpond County Park near Bishop.

For more information, call the Bureau of Land Management Bishop Field Office: 760-872-5000 or ask for a map at the Interagency Visitors Bureau, 690 N. Main Street in Bishop.

That was three years after he'd suffered a heart attack and undergone a second surgery to place a stent in his coronary artery. In addition to the frequent trips up the hill, Ed has hiked Mount Whitney three times since that surgery. All the effort has made a healthy difference, Ed reports. "My cardiologist told me, 'Whatever you're doing, Ed, don't stop. It's wonderful.'"

After the switchbacks, the trail reaches a broad slope that in April or May is carpeted with little yellow flowers. Lizards dart about—a sight for winter-sore eyes. Ed spots two hikers picking their way down near a stony outcrop with just enough shade for a couple dogs. It's his trail-blazing accomplice, Campy Camphausen, 72, along with Bob West, 68, both of Bishop.

Campy, in running shorts, has the look of an ultra marathoner but says he's just getting back into hill shape after a few months off. He holds court with a brief history of trail trial and error before he and Bob amble on.

The trail gets brutally steep and sandy now—Ed and Campy didn't bother too much with switchbacks here. All that lung busting comes to a false summit and a saddle. One more mercifully short push leads to the real summit, where a tiny pine tree encased in chicken wire calls attention away from the all-encompassing views. Ed and Campy planted it back in December 1994, hoping to create enough shade for two humans. It's not exactly there yet, but the dwarf Jeffery is well cared for, receiving water via a funnel to its roots.

On the rocks near the tree, the Sierra lean in icily to the west. The Whites loom across the valley. Casa Diablo seems within spitting distance and the snowline appears to rise by the second. Those rocks house the summit registry, a testament to the trail's down-low popularity. Ed is glad to know that so many hikers enjoy the trail although he's not pleased about the graffiti carved into the original registry.

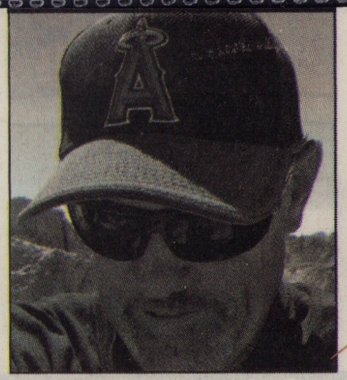
Most entries mention the amazing views and the bright blue skies. One comments on the challenging nature of this short but steep route: "The EZ trail…not so easy!"

"It's a good workout," Ed admits. After penning his customary "EZ" signature in the registry (that's number 1,341) and watering the tree, Ed doesn't hesitate on the hardscrabble descent. He leans forward and makes nimble work of the downhill, leaving his hiking partner, more than 40 years his junior, in the dust.

Stacy Corless, of Crowley Lake, is a frequent contributor to the magazine.

Tungsten Peak once again

(Hiked on Oct. 14, 2017)



CRAIG JACKSON
COLUMNIST

A limited schedule last week left only a few hours for an adventure of some type, and I found the perfect spot with a great view. The almost-forgotten hills between Bishop and the Sierra Nevada are called the Tungsten Hills and are full of mining and lumber history. For example, the lake at Millpond Park on the north side of Bishop was created to store lumber from the mill nearby. The hills to the west are dotted with dirt roads going here and there, and numerous mine shafts on the hillsides. This area is not great for hiking in the warm summer months due to its lack of shade, but in fall and winter the hiking is especially fun.

Although this has been a rather short hiking season, it has been one of the most memorable I can remember. Weekly hikes to places far away from civilization and the hustle and bustle of human life; only seeing Mother Nature at her finest. But alas, the temperatures are staying mild for now, which means one thing, the best time of year to go hiking.

The hike to Tungsten Peak takes less than an hour most of the time, so I decided to take one of my favorite drives up Pine Creek Canyon. There are many great spots to park along the side of the road and follow a climber's trail, and that's exactly what I did. I pulled over about a mile from the end of Pine Creek Road and parked on the right side next to an old mining road, now a climber's trail.

I followed the single track trail as it approached the base of Wheeler Crest, where I once saw a herd of 20 Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep, but none on this walk. I took a couple of pictures here then opted to head back down the winding road, through Rovana to the Tungsten Hills. The drive took me past Round Valley School, near the almost-closed-for-the-season Horton Creek Campground and eventually into the parking lot next to the lake at Millpond Park.

I prefer to start at Millpond rather than drive the dirt road to the trailhead because it adds a mile or so to the hike and is the perfect warm up for the uphill battle that lies ahead. The weather was starting to warm up slightly at 9:30 a.m. as I began walking cross country through the dense brush to the signed trail head at the base of the peak.

This is where it starts to get serious and extremely fun at the same time. Thankfully there was a cool wind blowing, but that didn't stop the sweat from starting to flow as I steeply climbed up the narrow trail in the canyon to a flat spot above, completing step one of the five step process. After a few breaths of relief I found the trail leading straight uphill to the top of another ridge, then followed it around some large boulders, 1,000 feet higher than the trailhead. The views are great from here, with the Owens Valley and Owens River Gorge to the north and east and massive Mount Tom to the west.

After a mile of slogging up the hill, I passed a wall of uneven boulders and caught my first glimpse of my final destination, 5,930 foot Tungsten Peak. A few more steps, and some heavy breathing, took me to the summit and the astonishing vistas west to the humongous Sierra escarpment, Buttermilk Country and formidable Wheeler Crest. This wasn't one of those great all day adventures I've grown accustomed to in the mighty Sierra Nevada, but it was extremely fun and a great workout also.

(Craig Jackson is a Bishop resident and avid hiker/backpacker wh enjoys exploring his backyard after havin cated here in 2013 fr Southern California. him at Sierracj51@gr com.)

It's a tough 1.5 mile hike to Tungsten Peak but the views make it totally worth the effort.

Photo by Cr

On top of the Tungstens

Sierra Nevada under partly cloudy skies from the Tungsten Hills Highpoint.

(Hiked on Jan.4, 2016)

The Tungsten Hills are a small rocky range east of the Sierra and west of Bishop, next to Round Valley. Not noticed or photographed as much as their massive neighbors to the west, most people drive through town without noticing this wonderful little piece of heaven in our own backyard.

During the summer months, the temperature gets ridiculously hot in the Tungstens, limiting outdoor activities in this arid region. In winter, it's a whole different ball game. Cold temps and cloudy skies are usually the norm, making for absolutely perfect hiking conditions. The occasional storm passes by, leaving a trace of snow at its highest points.

Tungsten Peak, elevation 5,930 feet, is the most popular peak in the range and the easiest to hike to. There's a nice trail that begins on the east side and steeply snakes its way to the top in just over a mile.

The peak is close to Millpond Park and just a short dirt road drive to the trailhead. For the longest time, I thought it was the high-point of the Tungsten Hills until recently when I discovered there's a higher summit.

While skimming through pages on the website Summitpost.org, I happened across a couple of pages on the Tungsten Hills and the Tungsten Hills High Point. On previous hikes to Tungsten Peak I had noticed a peak to the west that appeared slightly higher but looked a lot farther from a parking area. A couple days after New Year's Day I decided to get out and try to make it to the top.

There seems to be a few ways to get to the high-point, either with or without four-wheel drive. I chose to park northwest of the summit at the entrance to the Horton Creek Campground and hike across Round Valley then up to the peak. The campground is off of S. Round Valley Road, west of Millpond Park.

The day of the hike was one day before a big storm was due to arrive here in the Owens Valley with partly cloudy skies and a very nice breeze blowing from the north. Wearing warm-weather clothes and excited about the hike, I started out around 9 a.m. in a southeastern direction.

The Tungsten Hills High-Point can be clearly seen ahead in the distance as it rises slightly above other peaks in the vicinity. I hiked up the campground road and then crossed over Horton Creek within the first half-mile. There is a nice dirt road that can be walked on but it goes slightly out of the way. The best way to get to the base of the high-point is to hike cross country through the rabbit brush, knee high at its highest.

Two miles from the start, I went south of a small hill and up into a treeless canyon. I passed an old National Forest Boundary sign and found an old motorcycle trail that took me to the bottom of the canyon. I followed the rarely used path as it climbed out of the canyon onto a east-west ridge that led to a nice saddle just south of the high point. From here, I left the trail and headed straight up to the summit ridge.

The rest of the way was a short distance over some boulders, getting me to the 6,358-foot summit in just over two hours. According to the summit register, this peak is not visited very often, evidenced by the 17 signatures dating back to February 1999 and the one signature for all of 2015. I had a nice bologna sandwich for lunch while enjoying the impressive view of Mount Tom and Round Valley, watching the darker clouds roll in from the west.

For my return I decided to make a loop of the hike and continued north along the ridge before dropping straight down to the canyon floor, across the flatlands and back to the car. It took another hour to get back to the trailhead

The highest point in Buttermilk Country and the Tungsten Hills, 8,083-foot Grouse Mountain, can be seen for miles around, peaking above the others while backlit by the mighty Sierra escarpment. Sarah and I discussed climbing it originally, but with all of its flanks covered in snow, we opted for a peak lower in elevation. Less than three years ago, on a solo wandering adventure near Horton Creek, I ended up on the tallest peak in the Tungsten Hills, boringly named the Tungsten Hills High Point (elevation 6,358 feet). And that's where we decided to spend the day.

My friend Sarah is a serious mountain climber who is up for any type of adventure, but since it was up to me to decide where we hiked that day, I thought a nice romp through the brush in Round Valley looking for deer, then a stiff climb to a register-topped summit would make for a good day. Throw in some roaming around mine ruins on the high ridges, and it actually turned into a great and very memorable day.

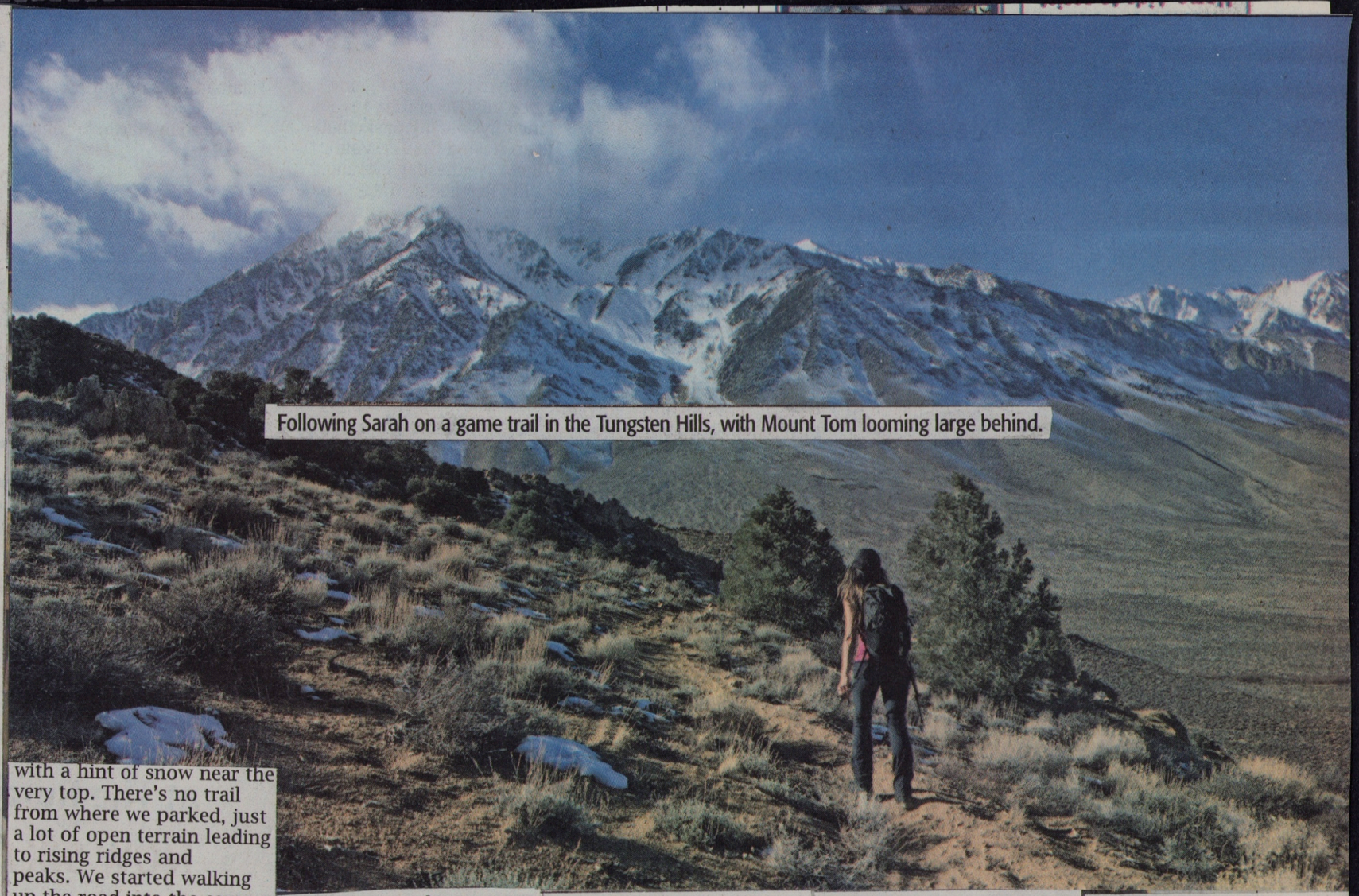
I picked Sarah up at 8:30 a.m., stopped at Manor Market for edibles and beverages then headed out to Round Valley, via Millpond Park and South Round Valley Road. By far, on the top of my list as far as "drives in the country" go, the views and solitude are what driving on a country road is all about. We eventually turned left on Horton Creek Campground Road and parked at the roundabout next to the closed campground gate.

Our destination was clearly visible for the entire four mile approach, looming larger than the others with a hint of snow near the very top. There's no trail from where we parked, just a lot of open terrain leading to rising ridges and peaks. We started walking up the road into the campground for a few hundred feet before finding a spot to cross Horton Creek, amongst a thicket of congested vegetation and rocks. From here, it's a gradual descent, weaving in and out of knee high Rabbit brush for more than two miles to the base of the rising mountains.

After a short break before the hardest part, Sarah and I reveled in seeing a small herd of mule deer bounce past us with amazing grace, disappearing in the distance gradually. Onward and upward, and so it began, the uphill portion of the hike was upon us, but with all the struggle and sweat we were still able to have a great conversation and enjoy each other's company. After dipping into a small canyon, we approached a steep ridgeline coming down from a saddle beneath the north side of the high point. It looked like we were on some kind of game trail up to the saddle, where it continued down the other side while we turned right and began the final push to the summit.

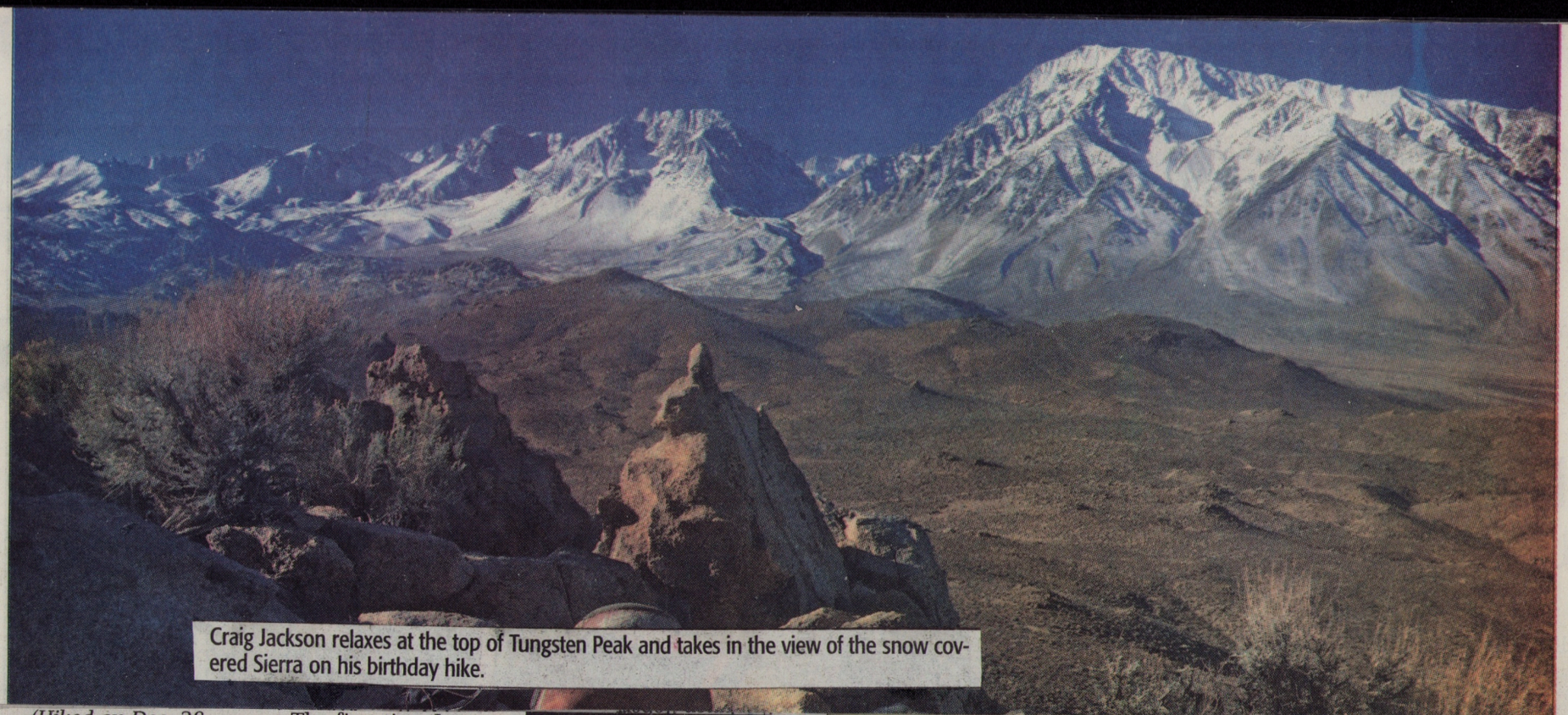
Sarah was on point, leading the way up a steep slope and around numerous patches of snow and large boulders, putting us at the windy and frigid summit two hours after starting form the campground. We ate our grapes, watermelon, cheese and crackers; signed the summit register then headed back down, in a different direction. Along the west ridge we went, bootskiing in the loose dirt down to a saddle and a very old dirt road.

To our left I spotted a large pile of tailings next to a mine shaft on a flattened piece of earth. It was a lot of fun exploring the area with someone like Sarah, finding relics of a bygone era in Bishop history. After a few minutes here, up and over another bump we went, until the only way to go was down. Straight down the slope we went, wandering next to Horton Creek on the return, and arriving back at the car safe and sound. What can I say, another excellent outing, filled with fun and forever memories.



Following Sarah on a game trail in the Tungsten Hills, with Mount Tom looming large behind.

(Craig Jackson is a Bishop resident and avid hiker/backpacker who enjoys exploring his new backyard after having relocated here in 2013 from Southern California. Email him at Sierracj51@gmail.com.)



Craig Jackson relaxes at the top of Tungsten Peak and takes in the view of the snow covered Sierra on his birthday hike.

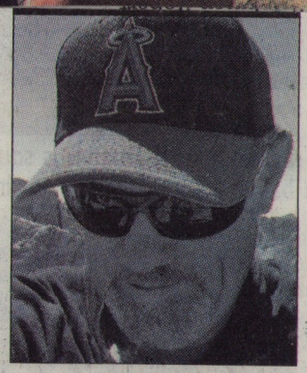
(Hiked on Dec. 28, 2018)

I normally don't get myself a gift on my birthday, matter of fact I don't think I ever have. So, instead of breaking tradition and going to a store and buying a useless material object, I thought standing on top of a mountain on my birthday would be the ultimate gift to myself.

It was a Friday and my brother was due in town later in the day, so I figured an early start to a low elevation peak would be perfect. Then, later in the day, do some kind of hike with Mark, followed by dinner at Whiskey Creek in Bishop. Sounds like a pretty good birthday to me, but which mountain should I climb?

The first time I climbed Tungsten Peak (early 2000's), I was unaware of a nice trail that went all the way to the top. Instead, I parked next to the lake at Millpond Park and headed due west toward the mountain, looking for a spot on the south slope to start the climb. Eventually I made it to the top, landing on two smaller summits beforehand. Since then, I've hiked up the well-marked trail to the summit at least 25 times now, only during the colder days of winter. For my birthday, I thought it would be cool to go back to that first time and hike the same original route.

I woke up in a great mood on the morning of December 28th, looking forward to seeing my brother and also going for a hike. It was a beautiful morning to say the least, with white puffy clouds dancing under a perfectly blue sky. Although it was a little chilly in the early morning, I knew the steep climb to the top would soon warm me up.



CRAIG JACKSON
COLUMNIST

As I normally do when climbing Tungsten Peak, I parked at Millpond Park, instead of the trailhead one mile farther west. It gives me an extra mile of walking at the beginning to help warm up my old (one year older) bones. It was a few minutes ahead of 8:00 a.m. when I pulled into a parking spot near the lake at Millpond. I could clearly see my destination from the start, 1300 feet above the desert floor, yet dwarfed by 13,632 foot snow-capped Mount Tom behind. From the parking area at Millpond, I simply headed west over the sage-covered desert landscape for roughly a mile, jumping on a dirt road leading to a ridge coming down from Tungsten Peak's southeast side.

It's a pretty straightforward climb from the base of the peak, simply pick a route and go for it. I chose to attack the slope in a switchbacking fashion, electing to take the path ahead methodically and physically. It was quite steep and I was sweating, but the cool breeze dried up the beads as soon as they appeared.

I knew the trail was just another short climb uphill, but instead I kept to the left and continued the cross country journey. I was having a blast! There were dozens and dozens of fresh deer tracks all over the south side of 5951 foot Tungsten Peak, and I used them to my advantage, gaining elevation at a steady pace.

It took me an hour and a half to reach the summit ridge from the south, and a few minutes later I was standing on the rocky summit. The view was beyond spectacular, with Mount Tom seemingly within arm's reach, and the Sierra Crest on the horizon from north to south. I was a happy man on top of a mountain, one year older and just as wise.

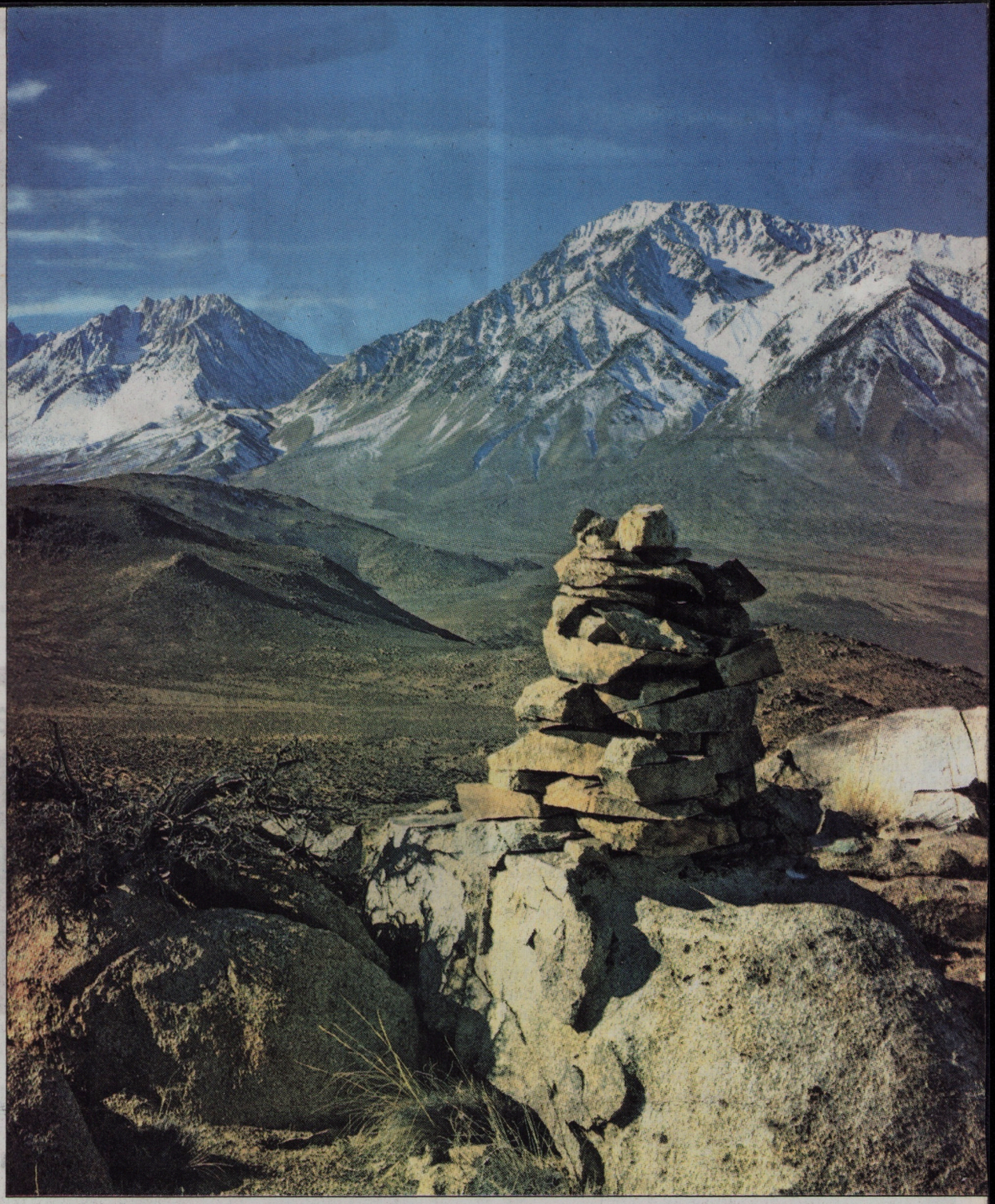
(Craig Jackson is a Bishop resident and avid hiker/backpacker who enjoys exploring his new backyard after having relocated here in 2013 from Southern California. Email him at Sierracj51@gmail.com.)

CRAIG JACKSON
COLUMNIST

(Hiked on Jan. 8, 2020)

Located less than a mile from Millpond Park at the north end of Bishop, the Tungsten Hills are an impressive foreground to the massive peaks of the Sierra Nevada. Popular with horseback riders and off-road motorcyclists, the treeless terrain of the Tungsten Hills is the perfect place to spend a couple of hours exploring. If you look hard enough, there's no doubt you'll find some signs of mining activity from many decades ago dotting the landscape here and there. I've spent many days climbing in the Tungsten Hills on the east side, so this time I thought I would spend some time exploring the west side.

Open during fishing season only, Horton Creek Campground is a great spot to stage while winter hiking in the eastern Sierra. From following old dirt roads in Round Valley to climbing a handful of small peaks in the Tungsten Hills, the entire area offers a multitude of hiking opportunities. Personally, I've spent countless days wandering aimlessly with or without a purpose, but always with an objective.



Amazing view of the Sierra from Peak 5800 in the Tungsten Hills.

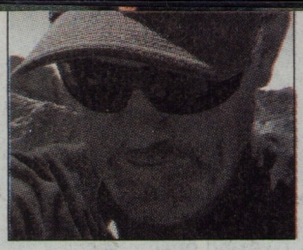
On this particular day I was hiking solo with somewhat of a plan in my head, but something that could easily change at any minute. It was cold that winter morning with increasing cloud cover throughout the day, but no chance of precipitation. I arrived at the entrance to Horton Creek Campground, north of Bishop, before 8 a.m. and parked in the dirt area next to the road. There were no other cars anywhere, just a few deer loitering about the campground and eating. It was the ideal scene to start a hike.

I headed up the road into the campground for a few hundred feet, then turned left on the service road that parallels the power line. Probably the most difficult thing I would have to do all day was in front of me, the crossing of Horton Creek. Where once were some large stepping boulders, they were now gone. Yet, with some careful foot placements on a slippery log, I made it across. From here, I simply followed the road for about a mile to the remnants of a foregone mining operation. It was hard to believe to me that this was the first time I'd been at this place. How is that possible?

I spent a few minutes exploring the mine area before picking a road to start hiking on. There was an obvious peak to the south, with a road crossing its saddle to the east, and that's the road I started up. With more tire tracks than boot prints, I left the rough road below the summit and headed straight up.

It didn't take long to reach the top of the small peak, where I found a long stick lodged between two rocks. The view of the Sierra from this perch was superb, as was everything all around. It was downright cold and the wind picked up considerably, prompting me to run back down to the road. I could see a taller peak less than a mile away to the east and that's where I headed next.

It was fun being out there for a few hours by myself wandering freely. I was having a blast. A short stiff climb followed, which put me on the top of unofficially named Peak 5800.



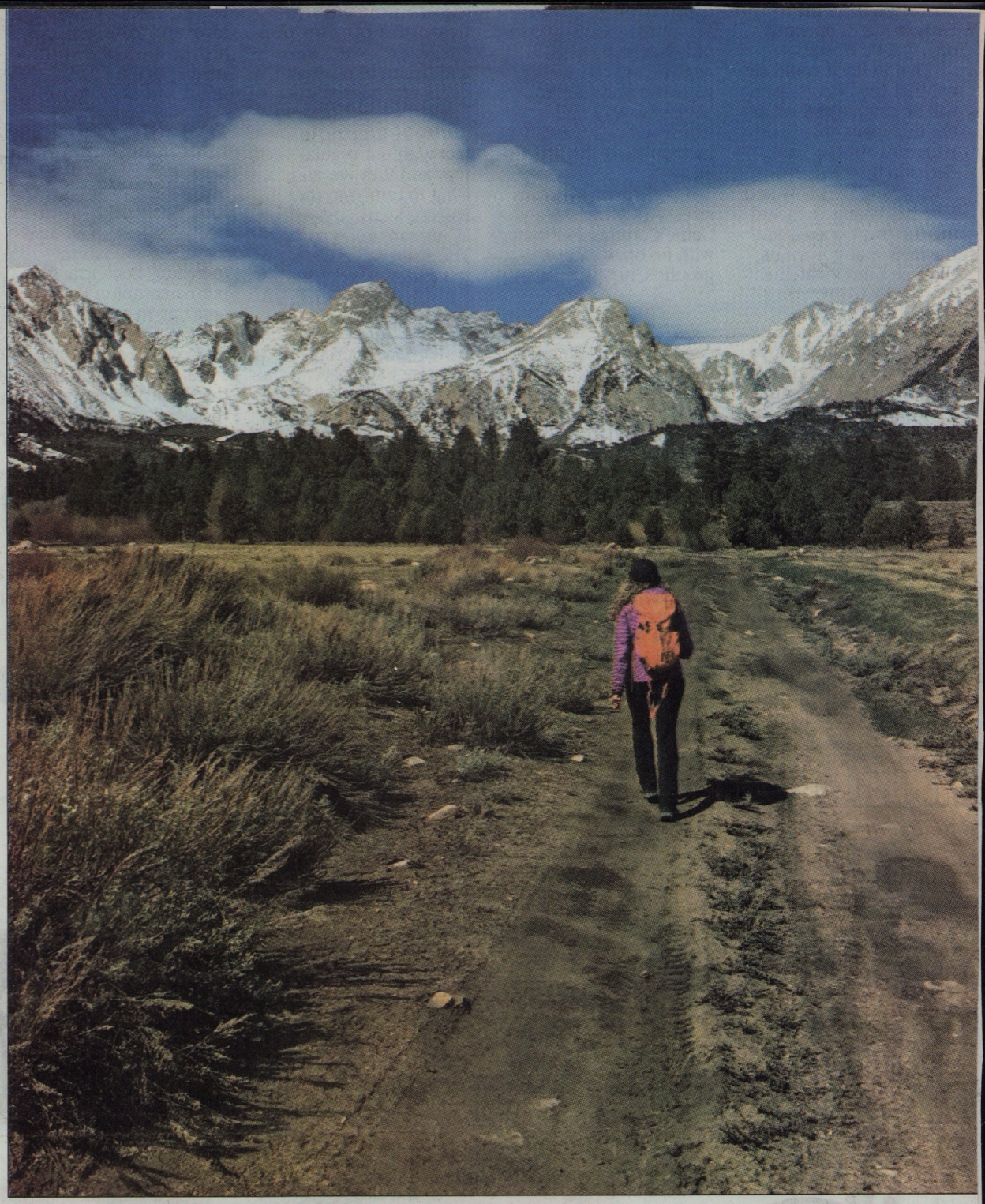
Craig Jackson
COLUMNIST

(Hiked on April 4, 2020)

Sometimes it's not an easy task trying to figure out where to go for a hike this time of year here in the Eastern Sierra. High elevation treks are still out of the question due to massive amounts of snow cover, which leaves the foothills and the valley floor as legitimate possibilities. Last weekend, Sarah, Peter and I were excited again about being outside during theses troubled times and with that in mind, we headed up State Route 168 towards Aspendell.

Recently, we had been doing a lot of exploring in the White Mountains, climbing small peaks and visiting old mines. This time however, the three of us agreed we needed to see some tall pine trees and a creek or two, so we headed out to an open area north of Aspendell. I met the two of them promptly at 8:46 a.m. at the corner of Buttermilk Road and SR168, some 7 miles west of Bishop. They followed closely behind me as we both drove up SR168 towards Aspendell, then a few hundred feet past South Lake Road, we parked at the large turnout we call the Upper Water Pipe Road. Within a few minutes we were off and running, actually walking up the highway for a quarter mile and turning right on the Shooting Range Road.

I had hiked the road next to the water pipe on numerous occasions, yet never ventured onto the other road that leads to the same place. Unlike the flat and level road below, our choice of travel took us uphill steeply, around tight corners and through a flat area that appeared to be occupied in the past. It was a lot of fun.



Making our way towards the tall pine trees and the Sierra Nevada.

Less than an hour into our hike, we met up with the Water Pipe Road and hiked uphill slightly, then were greeted with a magnificent view of the Sierra Nevada. Mt. Emerson, Mt. Humphreys, Basin Mountain and Mt. Tom loomed massive on the western skyline, seemingly touching the sky with their jagged peaks. Further on, we left the road and followed a half-buried water pipe due west towards 13,986-foot Mt. Humphreys.

Continuing west, we jumped on another dirt road and entered a beautiful pine forest. Immediately, the aroma caught us by surprise, causing us to stop and take it all in. It was pure heaven being so close to the mountains again, it seemed like it had been forever. We crossed over a handful of creeks for the next mile or so, prior to arriving at a junction.

We had two choices at this point, go straight ahead downhill or left uphill, we chose the latter. It was a slight struggle at this point as the wind picked and dark clouds started rolling in, prompting us to stop immediately and take an extended break. We hung out close to the road next to a tall pine tree and had a great time. Keeping my distance from the happy couple, it became difficult to have a conversation due to the raucous winds, so we decided to start hiking back. As usual for us, the return was just as fun as the

Winter wonderland above Aspendell

(Hiked on Dec. 17)
2014

Lake Sabrina is well known for its beautiful scenery, great hiking, backpacking and fishing during the summer and fall. The majority of visitors to the area enjoy the outdoor opportunities in the warmer months while few hike, snowshoe or cross-country ski during the frigid winter months to North Lake or Lake Sabrina.

At an elevation of 9,138 feet, Lake Sabrina was named after Sabrina Hobbs, whose husband, Charles Hobbs, was the first general manager of the Nevada Power Company, which built the dam at Lake Sabrina in 1907-08. It was constructed exclusively to hold spring runoff and regulate flow through the Bishop Creek Hydroelectric System. Five powerhouses, one control station, two gauging stations and other support buildings and dams make up the system structures.

During the cold winter months, State Route 168 closes for the season just beyond Aspendell, thus preventing vehicles from accessing the lakes above. To see Lake Sabrina, or North Lake, in its snowy mantle, get out your cross-country skis, snowshoes or waterproof hiking boots.

To reach the road closure, simply head west on 168 from downtown Bishop for 15 miles and park in the large turnout on the right where the gate crosses the road and the snow-plowing ends.

Before venturing beyond the gate, make sure you have all the warm clothing needed because it will be cold and wet. Start the hike by going around the gate and hiking up the snow-covered road. In the middle of the road, look for the path in the snow created by previous hikers and skiers.

Some slight uphill hiking for the first mile brings you to the turnoff for North Lake on the right and the official end of S.R. 168.

Definitely make the short side trip to the bridge over Middle Fork Bishop Creek or the mile or so hike up to North Lake. Adventurous seekers can hike up the road to North Lake, through the campground and onto either the Piute Pass Trail or the Lamarck Lakes Trail. Be overly-prepared if you choose the latter.

Continuing on to Lake Sabrina from the North Lake turnoff, regain the single track trail in the snow on the road and start ascending slightly. I've driven this road hundreds of times and must admit, it is very cool hiking it in the snow with no cars driving by or parked at the hiker parking area. The only sound I heard was the wind blowing through the trees and the creek cascading down the canyon.

Cross over the new, old-looking bridge after a mile and a half and then pass the Sabrina Basin trailhead on the left before the road curves up toward the boat landing. Reach the landing at the end of the road and marvel at the beautiful winter mountain scenery.

Find a perfect spot for a break or venture onto the Inlet Trail next to the cafe. Either choice will have spectacular views of the snow-covered peaks and the icy lake. Spend plenty of time taking in this winter wonderland before returning to your car.

AT A GLANCE:

- Snow hike; bring plenty of warm clothing, gloves and waterproof boots.
- Pay attention to the weather; it can change at a moment's notice.
- Stay on the road for safety reasons.
- Beautiful snow-covered trees, rocks and boulders.
- Watch for patches of ice.

The snow-covered State Route 168 turnoff to North Lake.

A beautiful winter scene of Middle Fork Bishop Creek in mid-December.

now a great trail

(Hiked on Jan. 19)
2015

Inyo County's labyrinth of backcountry dirt and partially-paved roads lead to exciting off-highway adventures. You'll discover natural wonders, hidden places steeped in mining history and spectacular vistas.

Bishop is a quaint little town that sits cradled between the Sierra Nevada and the White Mountains in Owens Valley. Once the center of mining and cattle farming in the Northern Owens Valley, it has now established itself as a year-round outdoor playground – with hiking, mountaineering, bouldering, a rich mining history and trails leading to some very unique and beautiful areas of the Eastern Sierra waiting to be explored.

There are a myriad of dirt roads throughout Inyo County that were built many decades ago and are off-limits to vehicles today, but are open to foot, horse and bicycle traffic. Although an eyesore to some, I've learned to live with them and have realized that they make for great hiking trails that lead to historic and gorgeous destinations.

One of these roads is in South Fork Bishop Creek Canyon and is a perfect hiking trail with exceptionally unsurpassed views of the Sierra Nevada west of Bishop. It also leads to a historic mine located in a secluded area above Bishop Creek Lodge (8,700 feet elevation). I've hiked this more than a dozen times and have seen only one person.

To reach the start of the hike from Bishop, simply head west on State Route 168 for 15 miles to the signed junction with South Lake Road. Turn left and drive a few miles, passing Bishop Creek Lodge on the right, before the "Road Closed" sign and park in one of the turnouts alongside the road.

Look for the road on the left side that leads down to South Fork Bishop Creek with a sign that says "Road Closed Ahead." Walk down this road to a very sturdy bridge over the creek. Encounter a vehicle gate and merely circumvent it taking the path on the right.

Stay on the road as it heads left, passing the road to the house on the right under "Misty Falls." The pavement will soon end while the road turns to dirt, rocks and vegetation. Now on a perfect hiking trail, pass a sign stating the road is closed ahead and limited to foot and horse traffic. Start hiking moderately, steep in spots, uphill with views opening up South Fork Bishop Creek Canyon and the small community below. Presently, snow is not a problem but definitely can be if another big storm finally arrives.

Easy uphill hiking to the top of the first ridge leads to a wonderful level area, perfect for a short break. Enjoy the scenery and cool breeze before heading rather steeply uphill on a couple of switchbacks to the top of another ridge. Views of Mount Humphreys, Basin Mountain and Mount Tom are very impressive from here.

At this point, the trail heads moderately uphill as it zigzags through large boulders and vegetation. After 3.5 miles from the start, arrive at a junction that goes left uphill to a saddle. Stay on Road 31E305E as it climbs mildly and in less than a half mile you'll see a tailing pile, at the Discovery Mine, on the left. Either climb briefly up to the site or continue on the trail to a road on the left leading to the mine site. Explore the area carefully while wandering about the small and wonderful spot. Enjoy the clean, fresh air and the spectacular views before heading back down the trail.

AT A GLANCE:

- Cold and breezy; bring proper clothing
- Inyo County mining history
- Outstanding views of the Sierra Nevada
- Stay clear of excavation area unstable
- Check weather forecasts before hiking; possible heavy snow
- 7.6-mile round-trip; approximately 1,500 feet elevation gain

There are constant outstanding views along the trail to the Discovery Mine.

A cloud over Mount Humphreys (13,986 feet) from the road to the Discovery Mine.

Sierra Sojourns

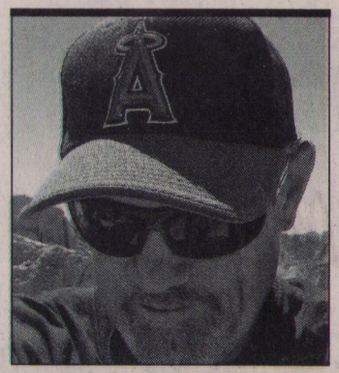
Two peaks climbed on Wheeler Crest

(Hiked on Aug. 26, 2016)

Wheeler Crest is the massive mountain ridge that extends roughly six miles north to south west of North Round Valley, and is clearly visible from Bishop and anyone traveling on U.S. Highway 395. I climbed the southern high-point, 12,966 foot Wheeler Peak back in 2014 and was back to try and summit a couple of peaks 1,400 feet above Dorothy Lake. Inspired by one of Bob Burd's Trip Reports from 2015, my plan was to start from the Tamarack Bench Trailhead at Rock Creek Lake and hike the moderate three miles to 10,560 foot Dorothy Lake.

Then comes the serious part, climb 1,300 feet in less than a mile to a low-point on Wheeler Crest. After topping out, I planned to follow the crest north to nearby Peak 11,980 and 11,962 foot Round Valley Peak. Since it was my son's birthday, I felt as though I needed to succeed to commemorate his 25th year on earth.

There were a couple of good thunderstorms in the Sierra the week before and I sure was hoping they'd back off for my hike, but it was quite cloudy as I was driving up Rock Creek Road at 8:30 a.m. I turned left at Rock Creek Lake and



CRAIG JACKSON
COLUMNIST

parked at the Tamarack Bench Trailhead on the left side. So far I've had many great experiences on this trail in the past and last Friday was no different, despite the smoky conditions in the foothills and down in Owens Valley.

The trailhead is in the middle of a small campground with a couple of parking spots for hikers, but there also is a large parking area opposite the trailhead. I hit the trail a few ticks past 9 a.m. and immediately encountered uphill hiking as the rocky path climbs above Rock Creek Lake with gorgeous views of the 13,000 foot peaks above Little Lakes Valley. The ascent eased at the one mile mark on some nice level terrain through a forest of whitebark and lodgepole pines. The easy walking continued past a trail junction then down to a colorful meadow with rocky Wheeler Crest guarding the basin.

It took about an hour and 15 minutes to hike the three miles (seemed less) to Dorothy Lake, where I planned my ascent route up Wheeler Crest. I opted for the shortest route possible; straight up. The maintained trail ended on the east shore of Dorothy Lake and that's where I turned right into the forest towards the base of the crest. Above treeline now, the daunting climb was on loose dirt and rocks, slipping backwards with almost every step and using my hands and upper body to continue the upward climb. The views south to Broken Finger Peak and Mount Morgan were inspirationally impressive, as well as looking back down from whence I came.

What a great feeling it was to arrive on the crest, slightly disappointed by the smoke covering the Owens Valley and the lack of views in that direction. It was definitely a lot windier and cooler on the ridge as I started towards my first goal, Peak 11,980. My legs were a little wobbly from the 1,300 foot climb from Dorothy Lake, but that wasn't going to alter my plans.

Within 10 minutes I was standing on top of Peak 11,980, looking northeast at Round Valley Peak, a quarter of a mile away. The gray clouds were becoming more prominent so I hurried down to the saddle and up to the summit of Round Valley Peak, finding a great old register at the summit block.

North view on Wheeler Crest of Peak 11,980 ft. on the left and Round Valley Peak in the middle.

Photo by Craig Jackso

My lunch consisted of a Von's breakfast burrito and some cherry Kool-Aid, which sounds odd but tasted great on a Sierra Nevada peak. My stay wasn't long, knowing I had to make the descent back down to Dorothy Lake and also the possibility of thunderstorms looming bigger in the sky. I started back down to Dorothy Lake, obtaining a massive amount of dirt and rocks in both boots and some very dirty legs, but it was all good when I got back down to the forest.

I found an old campsite on the east side of Dorothy Lake positioned perfectly underneath some nice shade trees and also an excellent view. While exploring the area I saw dozens and dozens of small frogs jumping around and swimming in the lake and fluorescent-colored caterpillars slithering through the green grass. A sight I'd never seen before.

The clouds became darker as the day went on, and not wanting to get wet, I swiftly arrived back at the trailhead just as the raindrops were hitting Rock Creek Lake's smooth surface.

(Craig Jackson is a Bishop resident and avid hiker/backpacker who enjoys exploring his new backyard after having relocated here in 2013 from Southern California. Email him at Sierracj51@gmail.com.)

MOUNTAIN BRIEFS

Outdoor activities

September

Brown Lake

(Hiked on June 10, 2016)

Unless you've been living in an abandoned mine shaft on an unnamed peak in a desert with no name, then you should be well aware of the drought that has grasped the throat of California over the last five years.

As an avid hiker in California over the same time period, I've seen a number of lakes go from full capacity to a dry hole as late as the fall of 2015. But this spring has brought some of those lakes back and it's a great thing to see.

There's a seldom visited hike that has its trailhead at one of the busiest on the east side of the Sierra. There's no sign denoting this trail but just a few yards away is the Bishop Pass Trail, which crosses the Sierra Crest in five miles at an elevation of 11,972 feet.

The Green Lake Trail starts at an unmarked gate at the top of the overnight parking area at South Lake, and within a few steps heads up an old water pipe.

Over the last 15 years vacationing, and now living, in Bishop, I've now been up this trail quite a few times and I must say that this was possibly the best one yet. The 2.9 mile hike to Green Lake and its 1,280 feet of elevation gain, was perfect weather-wise and had more water in its creeks than I have seen in the last five years. Between Brown Lake and Green Lake there's a creek crossing that I've leisurely walked through before but actually waded through this trip.

To get to the trailhead at South Lake I drove west on Highway 168 out of Bishop for 15 miles and made a left on South Lake Road. I continued another seven miles and parked in the day-use parking area at the end of the road, next to the trailhead sign and bear boxes. On this hike I walked to the top of the parking area and went around the black gate next to the small pond.

The dirt trail ends within a few feet where an old water pipe starts uphill through the trees. It's pretty easy and enjoyable walking on the old pipe as it cruises moderately up before meeting up with the trail from Parchers Resort. While hiking the one mile on the pipe I saw three small creeks that I had never seen before, a good sign of things to come.

A mile into the hike the trail has a few steep switchbacks and then crosses a wild outlet stream at the top of the ridge. I could hear the water crashing from below that I believe was the outlet to Bluff Lake, a few feet off the trail next to the canyon below Brown Lake.

Strolling on an undulating path through the forest I caught my first glimpse of Brown Lake. In my head I expected it to look like the puddle it was last year, but to my surprise it was back to full capacity and better than ever. Seven months earlier I passed by Brown Lake without looking but this time I spent a few moments enjoying its rebirth.

The trail continues up from Brown Lake through a very marshy area and reaches the impossible creek crossing.

There was one submerged log and two rocks under water so I just waded on through, soaking my boots and socks. I arrived at Green Lake and encountered the only snow on the entire hike. It was very wet and quite cool at Green Lake so my stay there didn't last very long. I followed the inlet to Green Lake up a boulder covered creek to what I thought would be another lake, but turned out to be a nice high plateau meadow.

On the return, a final stop at Brown Lake before returning to the parking area at South Lake at 4 p.m.

On a similar note, I was in Mammoth the next day and was equally amazed at the sight and high water level at Horseshoe Lake, which had been embarrassingly low. This has definitely been a June to remember.

Little Brown Lake is a two-mile hike from the trailhead at South Lake.

Green Lake and a blue sky on a great day of hiking.

Colorful scene from the Bishop Pass trail of Long Lake and Mount Goode.

Photo by Cra

Sierra Sojourns

Tyee Lake No. 1 is the first of a half dozen lakes up little known Tyee Canyon.

MOUNTAIN REPORT
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2017

Sierra Sojourns

Back to the beginning

The Tyee Lakes Trail is probably the least known trail in the entire Bishop Creek drainage, seemingly known by locals and hiking addicts alone. Most of the adventure seekers that drive up South Lake Road are destined for the Bishop Pass Trail and points beyond, but not me on this day. It was a nice warm Sunday when I started up Highway 168 a little later than usual, approximately 9:30 a.m. The trailhead is exactly 2 miles past the Bishop Creek Lodge on South Lake Road and that's exactly where I began the hike by crossing the old wood bridge over South Fork Bishop Creek.

Although short in nature standards, the 3.8 miles to Tyee Lake No. 6 are full of everything to quench ones outdoor desires, from steep switchbacks in a beautifully shaded pine forest to a small beach on a lake in a granite filled basin. The first two miles are the toughest, gaining the majority of the elevation prior to arriving at Tyee Lake No. 1, 1,200 feet higher than the 9,100-foot trailhead.

This is a nice little lake with some great spots near the trail on the west side for fishing or just plain 'ol relaxing, but my path continued up the ridge to lake No. 2. This is the smallest of the Tyee Lakes, with basically no shore access and lots of tall grass all around. Like lake No. 1, the trail steeply climbs in a staircase fashion up more switchbacks to an overlook overlooking Tyee Lake No. 3. It's across the canyon to the north and very small, no need to check it out.

Within moments I arrived at Tyee Lake No. 4, larger than the previous three lakes with a granite shoreline and crystal blue water. It's a short and pleasant walk to the biggest and best of the Tyee Lakes, No. 5. I located a familiar spot on the beach next to the dry creek that comes down from Table Mountain. There was a cool breeze but still warm enough to be wearing a T-shirt, so I decided to venture on up the trail to Table Mountain.

The views started opening up tremendously as I followed the trail up from the lake and onto the large plateau area above. I could see everywhere, from Mt. Tom and the peaks of the Evolution Region to the west and the impressive Inconsolable Range to the south. I left the trail and aimed for the highest point above Tyee Lake No. 5, known as Peak 11,936.

I hiked around some large boulders up the north slope and after a few more steps was on the summit looking down at the Tyee Lakes. On top was an old jar containing a summit register more than 50 years old. I signed while admiring the entire south fork up to Bishop Pass, seemingly a stone's throw away but impossible to reach. After taking a few pictures I decided to head back down the same way I came, enjoying each and every step one more time.

Still waters dominate the scene on Tyee Lake No. 1.

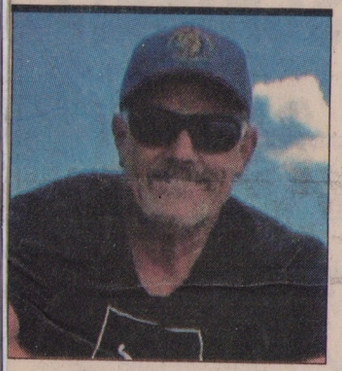
Photo by Craig

2014

Sierra Sojourns

Pipeline to beauty

If you're looking for an adventure on a seldom-used trail that is relatively close to Bishop, I highly recommend a hike to Green Lake near Parchers Resort. The walk to Green Lake is one of the least crowded in the area and offers some gorgeous mountain vistas and a couple of wonderful lakes; perfect for fishing, camping or just enjoying a day hike on one of our nice



CRAIG JACKSON
COLUMNIST

Sierra Nevada days.

Located near the Bishop Pass Trail, one of the Eastern Sierra's most popular trails, chances are excellent that you'll either have the trail to yourself or possibly see a fisherman or two along the way. If you're energized and physically able, the trail beyond Green Lake extends up to Coyote Flat, down into Baker Canyon, onto High Meadows and eventually ends in North Fork Big Pine Canyon. It is possible to do this as a one-way day hike with a car shuttle or just climb a peak or two above Green Lake.

To reach the trailhead from downtown Bishop, head west on State Route 168 (West Line Street) for 15 miles to the turnoff for South Lake on the left. Drive 7.2 miles to the end of the road at South Lake and park in the day use parking area. Walk to the upper end of the backpackers' parking lot and look for the green metal gate and dirt road.

Chances are excellent that you'll either have the trail to yourself or possibly see a fisherman or two along the way.

Walk around the metal gate onto the dirt road, past a small building on the right and the start of the trail. The first mile of the hike begins on, or next to, an old water pipe that used to bring water down from a couple of creeks into South Lake. The elevation gain on the old pipe is very moderate while it rolls through the forest as it climbs the mountainside. In one mile, the pipe portion of the trail ends as it joins the trail coming up from Parchers Resort. This is an alternate trailhead that adds 500 feet of elevation gain as well as a half-mile of hiking.

Once on the now well-defined trail, start a series of steep switchbacks for the next 0.3 miles and then cross a creek near the top. Continue hiking uphill in a ravine that was once devastated by an avalanche but is now brightened by summer wildflowers and new forest undergrowth. Now enjoy pleasurable walking through a forest and a couple of small meadows with shooting star and primrose monkey flower. The ascent eases slightly at 1.5 miles as the main trail crosses little Brown Lake's outlet creek.

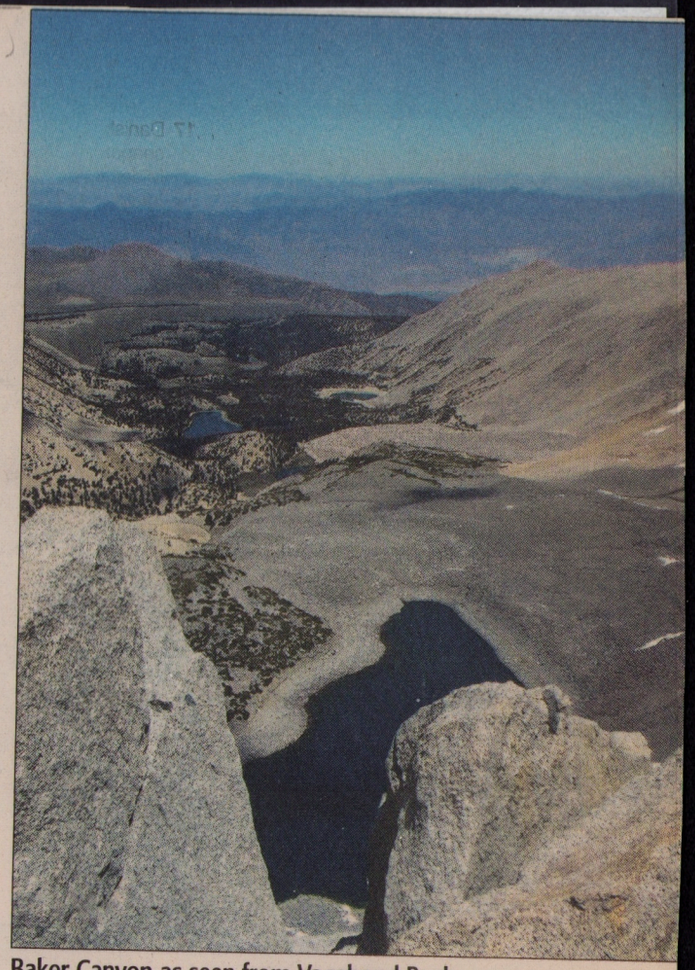
Brown Lake, small and possibly a future meadow, offers a great spot for a rest and a snack break with impressive mountain vistas all around. After a peaceful break at Brown Lake, continue on the trail as it heads in an easterly direction, first through a marshy area and then a couple of switchbacks on a rocky ridge. Cross Green Lake's outlet creek in a boulder-filled ravine at 2.4 miles and climb onward towards Green Lake.

Stay to the left on the trail and at 3.0 miles, arrive at large, attractive Green Lake at an elevation of 11,054 feet. The 1,400-foot-long lake lives up to its name as the water is a beautiful shade of green with wildflowers lining its shoreline. On the east and south sides of the lake are wonderful spots for camping, fishing or just laying out a blanket and enjoying the crisp, clean high-altitude air.

If energized and there is enough sunlight left in the day, experienced hikers may want to take the trail as it continues around the south side of the lake and begins a long, steep ascent up to a rarely visited area called Coyote Flat or Grunion Plateau. Once at the top, the grade eases and passes through a rocky alpine meadow. To the north, The Hunchback (12,228 feet) may lure some hikers to its non-technical summit.

The main trail continues through the meadow and then reaches a saddle and begins descending down to Thunder and Lightning Lake, Baker Lake and eventually North Fork Big Pine Canyon in a total of about 14 miles from the trailhead at South Lake. When I recently did this hike, I left the main trail near The Hunchback and headed cross-country in a southwest direction, did some moderate boulder-hopping to the summit of Vagabond Peak (13,374 feet). The 360-degree views of Baker Canyon, the Palisades, the Evolution Region and the lakes near the Bishop Pass Trail were beyond spectacular.

Whatever you choose to do once at Green Lake, I'm sure you'll have memories that will last a lifetime.



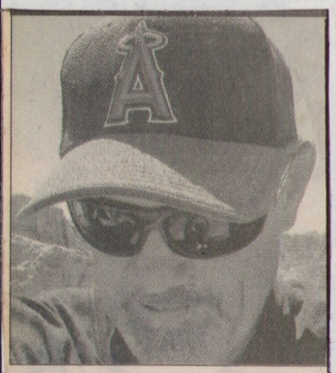
Baker Canyon as seen from Vagabond Peak.

AT A GLANCE:

- 6.0 miles round trip to Green Lake
- Thunderstorms possible at any time
- Still some lingering wildflowers; minimal mosquitoes
- 9,820 feet at trailhead; 11,054 feet at Green Lake; 13,374 feet at Vagabond Peak
- Near popular Bishop Pass Trail
- Bring proper map and compass

(Craig Jackson is a Bishop resident and avid hiker/backpacker who enjoys exploring his new backyard after having relocated here last year from Southern California.)

first Sierra Sojourn



CRAIG JACKSON
COLUMNIST

The trailhead for the hike to the Tyee Lakes is in South Fork Bishop Creek Canyon just five miles from S.R. 168, before Aspendell and Lake Sabrina. There is plenty of parking at the trailhead on the right side of the road, also look for some bear boxes and a wooden trailhead sign.

This is a great trail that is very easy to follow as it crosses over South Fork Bishop Creek then immediately starts uphill through a shady pine forest. Not as busy as the trailheads at South Lake and Lake Sabrina, expect to see a fisherman or two and maybe another hiker along the way. It's a very quiet hike with glorious lake vistas.

In spots, the grade is steep and challenging but very doable for casual hikers, with great payoffs when exerting more effort. Two miles into the hike and almost 1,200 feet higher than the trailhead, the path levels out and shortly I arrived at Tyee Lake 1. The trail moves around the north to the west side, where there's great fishing and lunch spots near the shore, then there are some nice switchbacks up to marshy Tyee Lake 2 at 2.9 miles in. Not much space at Tyee Lake 2 for relaxing so I followed the trail up some more switchbacks to Tyee Lake 4 (Lake 3 is off-trail to the left) at 10,800 feet and 3.5 miles from the trailhead.

Tyee Lake 4 is a big, gorgeous lake packed with trout but instead of fishing, I continued up the left side for a short distance to the best lake of the bunch, Tyee Lake 5. Lake 5 sits in a granite basin, surrounded by peaks, with a rocky shoreline and a nice sandy beach near perfect camping spots on the north side. This glistening lake sits at 11,015 feet and is just 3.8 miles from the trailhead. The elevation gain of 1,900 feet makes this more of a moderate to strenuous hike but the payoff is amazing.

I brought a nice beach towel and a small lunch and planted myself on the grassy, sandy beach and absolutely bathed in the splendid solitude for more than two hours. On this anniversary hike, this was my turnaround spot but on previous hikes up here, I've taken the short path to Tyee Lake 6 and also up the steep switchbacks on the use-trail to the Table Mountain area. Exceptional views of our local Sierra Nevada from Table Mountain, the short climb is definitely well worth it.

I started leisurely back down the trail, all downhill from here, and within an hour and a half I was back at my car. On my way back home to Bishop, I stopped at the Bishop Creek Lodge and had a great meal in a wonderful 85-year-old mountain lodge atmosphere. What a great way to end a perfect day hiking in our magnificent Sierra Nevada.

At a glance:

- 7.6 mile round-trip with 1,900-foot elevation gain to Tyee Lake 5
- 4.4-mile round trip with 1,200 foot elevation gain to Tyee Lake 1
- Awesome high country scenery from Table Mountain
- Still plenty of wildflowers out there
- Not too many mosquitoes but always carry repellent
- Keep your eyes on the skies; dark clouds move in, time to retreat

Beautiful Tyee Lake 1 is only 2.2 miles from the trailhead and has great fishing and lunch spots.

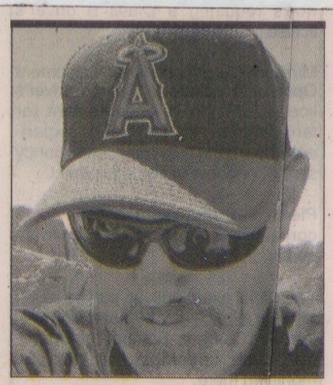
A great spot to relax and take it all in at Tyee Lake 5.

Sierra Sojourns

Cascades, lakes, peaks and sheer beauty

Beautiful view of Piute Lake from just below Piute Pass.

Photo by Craig Jackso



CRAIG JACKSON
COLUMNIST

(Hiked on June 13, 2015)

Not quite as popular as the Bishop Pass Trail, the Piute Pass Trail to Humphreys Basin and the John Muir Trail is equally as impressive and beautiful as its neighbor near South Lake.

The trail to Piute Pass (11,423 feet) ascends gradually, for most of the hike, near the gorgeous North Fork Bishop Creek, passing Loch Leven, Piute Lake and a number of small tarns, waterfalls and creeks along the way. Beyond Piute Pass there are many options for the avid day-hiker.

From the pass, sweeping vistas extend west across Humphreys Basin to the distant peaks rising above the western side of the South Fork of the San Joaquin Valley. Muriel Peak (12,937 feet), Mount Goethe (13,264 feet) and the other summits along the Glacier Divide are an amazing sight to the south while the impressive Mount Humphreys (13,986 feet) dominates the view to the north. This installment of Sierra Sojourn describes a hike I took two weeks ago up to Piute Pass and then on to big and beautiful Muriel Lake.

To reach the trailhead from Bishop, head west on West Line Street/State Route 168. Drive 18 miles, passing the small community of Aspendell, and turn right on the signed road to North Lake. Now on the steep, narrow mostly dirt North Lake Road, drive 1.6 miles and turn right to park in the hiker parking lot near the Bishop Outfitters pack station. Do not continue up the road to the North Lake Campground; there is no hiker parking at the trailhead. From the hiker parking lot, hike the 0.2 miles up to North Lake Road, turn right and continue another half-mile to the trailhead at the southwest end of North Lake Campground.

Start hiking to the right of the trailhead sign on the single-track trail past the last campsite and the junction to Lamarck Lakes. Start ascending the rocky trail through aspens and lodgepole pines in a thick, peaceful forest.

At 1.3 miles from the trailhead, cross the robust North Fork Bishop Creek on the first of two log bridges. In just 0.7 miles, the rugged trail moves higher and below the jagged pinnacles of the brilliant orange-red Piute Crags to the north. For the next mile, enjoy some well-manufactured switchbacks through talus slopes. The trail levels out slightly before a short set of granite steps, next to cascading North Fork Bishop Creek. Keep your eyes to the ground here and follow the trail on a granite ledge, pass a small waterfall and a nice pond on the left and then emerge above the shore of Loch Leven at 3.1 miles.

The trail levels out while you breathe a sigh of relief and delight in the grassy trail next to shimmering Loch Leven. Past the far end of the lake, the grade increases as you head up the canyon to the now visible Piute Pass in the distance.

Hike moderately for just over a mile from Loch Leven and arrive at the shore of Piute Lake at 10,743 feet. Beyond Piute Lake, the trail now meanders among boulders, a bunch of beautiful lakelets, creeks cascading down from the right, alpine flowers and majestic peaks. There are many places to rest and have lunch in this unbelievable setting but continue on because the best is yet to come.

Climb a series of well-designed switchbacks, crossing a couple of small creeks coming down from the pass at 4.8 miles in. Pause along the way to look back down the canyon at Piute Lake and Loch Leven, it will take your breath away.

The final ascent to Piute Pass kicks in at 5.3 miles and before you know it, you're standing at 11,423-foot Piute Pass! The panorama from this spot must be seen in person to be appreciated. Down below to the west is Summit Lake with Muriel Peak, Glacier Divide, the Pinnacles and Mount Humphreys surround the pass.

If there's any gas left in the tank, make a quick left at the pass on a sometimes used trail that leads to the shore of Muriel Lake in less than a mile. There are many places along the shore, and above the lake, to take off your boots and relish at this magnificent setting. Get well-rested before heading back to Piute Pass and the 5.5-mile hike back to the trailhead.

At a glance:

- 11 miles round trip to Piute Pass with 2,173 feet elevation gain.
- Add 1.5 miles round trip and no elevation gain to Muriel Lake.
- Plenty of water in the lakes and creeks in lush Piute Canyon.
- High Sierra adventure; be acclimatized before attempting.

Halfway up the old water pipe I spotted what could be the first Aspen leaves changing from green to yellow and it sure was a welcome sight. After a mile of pleasant walking, I left the water pipe and started a handful of steep switchbacks to the top of the ridge. Another mile up the trail I passed little Brown Lake, where it seemed colder and windier.

Three miles from my car, and 1,200 feet higher, I arrived at Green Lake, where I changed my mind and decided to climb something easier instead (The Hunchback). But by the time I hiked the 500 feet up to Grunion Plateau, I reverted back to the original plan and started up cross-country to Vagabond Peak. This is where the real fun began.

I took off quickly, aiming straight for the 13,374-foot peak, 2 miles ahead and 1,800 feet higher. The farther up I went, the colder it got but I guess something inside of me kept saying "keep going." A half hour after leaving the trail I was directly above Thunder and Lightning Lake, still with a mile to go and 900 feet to climb. The summit didn't seem like it was getting any closer visually, but I knew I was almost there.

The large boulders near the top created a few unforeseen obstacles, which I climbed over and around before surprisingly finding myself on the summit block of Vagabond Peak. It was freezing cold, and with the wind blowing so hard it was actually difficult to keep my balance. I found the sardine can summit register tucked between two large rocks and unrecognizably scribbled my initials in the small notebook.

Coming down from Vagabond Peak, right, I had a great view of Thunder and Lightning Lake and the Palisades.

2018

Photo by C

For the first couple of days last week I tentatively planned to visit Muriel Lake on the other side of Piute Pass for the first time this year, and annually for the last 15. I love it there, with dramatic Muriel Peak rising sharply above Muriel Lake, and Mt. Goethe alongside on the Sierra Crest, it's pure paradise on a heavenly scale. But the night before the big hike I changed plans and opted for a shorter, yet equally awesome, adventure up to Lamarck Lakes instead.

It's not a secret that the warm weather of summer has turned into the cold weather of fall, but the first big snowstorm has yet to arrive, leaving trails dry and still enjoyable. Although, the daylight hours are getting shorter every day, there's still time to get out in the Sierra Nevada "one more time" this year.

Incredible blue sky on this November day at Upper Lamarck Lake.

It was late for me, about 9:30 a.m., when I reached the hiker parking area next to the pack station, and only a few steps from North Lake. Ordinarily a busy parking area during the normal hiking season, there were only a few hearty souls venturing out this time of year, evidenced by the lack of activity at the trailhead. It felt great being there and I was looking forward to being in the wilderness, virtually all by myself.

Since the actual trailhead is within the confines of North Lake Campground, I had to walk up the dirt road into the campground for half a mile before starting up the trail, next to some campsites and a very cold North Fork Bishop Creek. Two minutes later I turned left at the signed junction for Lamarck Lakes and immediately began a series of steep switchbacks in a beautifully shaded forest.

After a mile and a half of uphill hiking, the trail took me to a refreshing level stretch and the turnoff to Grass Lake. It's a half mile descent to very small and grassy Grass Lake, which I passed on and continued up to the Lamarck Lakes. I was having a great time, zigzagging mercilessly up a cool and sunny ridge, barely breaking a sweat. In less than 3 miles I looked to the right at an obvious spot and caught a glimpse of Lower Lamarck Lake. I found a perfect spot to sit on some granite, just off the trail, a few feet above the lake, and that's exactly what I did. This specific lake has an idyllic feeling to it, a scene that hasn't changed for millions of years and will remain the same for a million more. It's a great spot to spend the day, and it's not far from the trailhead.

Not fully satisfied at this point, I continued up the trail to the larger Upper Lamarck Lake, less than a mile away and only 200 feet higher. The path followed the upper lake's outlet stream, next to an icy pond, across the creek on small rocks and narrowly gapping a granite slab. I could see 13,417 foot Mt. Lamarck rising above first, and then there it was, granite encased Upper Lamarck Lake. The trail ended at the north end of the rock-bound lake, so I climbed a rock ridge to the west and had the perfect spot to stare at my surroundings.

(Craig Jackson is a Bishop resident and avid hiker/backpacker who enjoys exploring his new backyard after having relocated here in 2013 from Southern California. Email him at Sierracj51@gmail.com.)

There are many trails that traverse the incredible Bishop Creek Canyon terrain. Vistas throughout the area are so outstanding that sometimes the hardest decision is which hike to attempt on any given summer day. The three forks of Bishop Creek Canyon (North, Middle and South) have trailheads that start above 9,000 feet, ending a few thousand feet higher at high elevation lakes or peaks. The North Fork and South Fork have trails that cross the Sierra Crest and connect with the popular John Muir and Pacific Crest Trails, while the Middle Fork (Sabrina Basin) does not cross the Sierra Crest but has dozens of beautiful lakes and premier High Sierra camping sites.

The plan for the day was to drive up the South Fork and check out the Tyee Lakes trail, and if time allowed, head up to South Lake and explore the water pipe trail to Green Lake. The Tyee Lakes trailhead is exactly two miles past the Bishop Creek Lodge on South Lake Road, right-hand side next to a wood footbridge over South Fork Bishop Creek. Even though it's only 3.8 miles to the largest Tyee Lake, the trail is moderately steep for the first two miles, then is only moderate the rest of the way.

Bluff Lake sits next to the Green Lake trail less than two miles from South Lake.

I started out at 11:30 a.m. walking across the bridge and beginning the initially snow-free first two miles to Tyee Lake One. The ascent began right away on the very familiar trail, one that I have hiked now a few dozen times. I passed a very boisterous Tyee Creek before starting the handful of switchbacks to the top of the ridge. It was an extremely nice day, and with the help of some nice forest shade, it took less than an hour to get to the first lake. It looked as beautiful as ever but I could see snow on the other side where the trail ascends to the second Tyee Lake, so I opted to take a couple of pictures then return to the trailhead and drive the 2.5 miles up to South Lake. I pulled into the day-use parking area at 2 p.m. and noticed right away that there were quite a few cars, mostly folks hanging around, fishing or hiking the Bishop Pass trail. I bypassed all of that and started up the gated road at the top of the parking lot, then transitioning from dirt to the 100-plus-year-old rusty water pipe – very surprised to hear water in it! The first mile was no problem as I reached the trail coming up from Parchers Resort. No snow to this point so I continued up to the top of the ridge and, you guessed it, snow and water.

The trail at this point was a raging creek, and come to find out later, it was the overflow from a very full Bluff Lake. I've visited this same spot at Bluff Lake many times now and this was the first time it was full enough to spill out of the outlet and onto the trail. I continued up the trail to Brown Lake, crossing over a huge snowfield before turning around and starting back. Possibly another month until I can get to Green Lake.

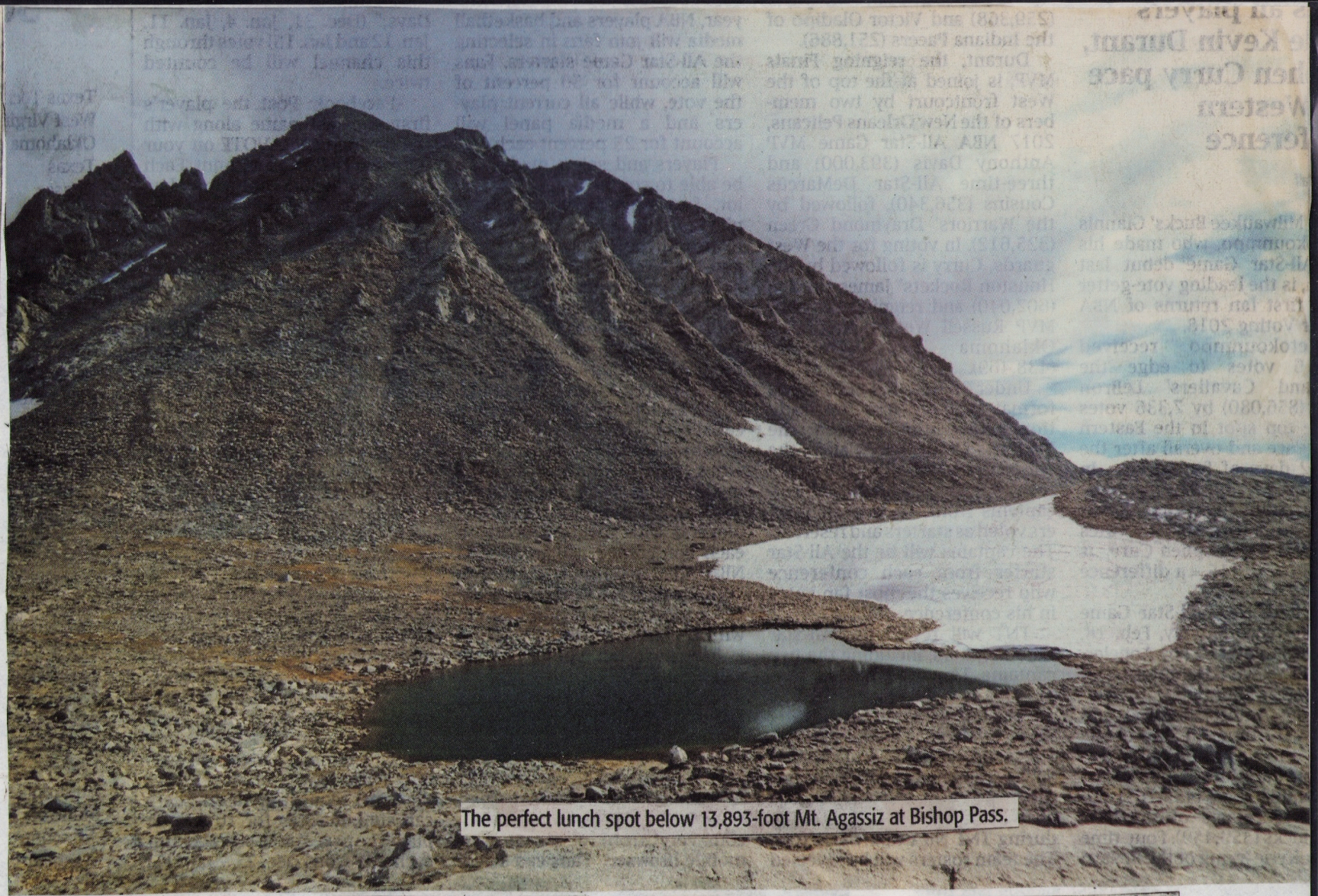
It was a cold morning on Oct. 30 when I pulled into a completely empty parking lot for the Bishop Pass trail at South Lake. I believe this was the first and only time I can recall starting a hike at this trailhead and seeing no other cars, meaning this was going to be a great day. With a starting elevation of 9,800 feet, hiking in late fall can be a chilly affair, but I was prepared for the worst. I started out wearing a jacket and gloves, but after the first mile of steady climbing above South Lake, I disrobed what I had just put on.

I strolled by the turnoff to Treasure Lakes after a mile as the trail leveled off in a beautifully fragrant pine forest. I walked over a small creek on a wood bridge then passed the turnoffs to Marie Louise Lakes and Chocolate Lakes, 2 miles from the trailhead. There had not been any snow falling yet in late October, making this the perfect hike, and all to myself. In less than an hour and a half I arrived at the north end of appropriately named Long Lake, taking notice of the pastoral small herd of deer grazing in the idyllic meadow below Bull Lake. A dream-like setting on a perfect fall Sierra Nevada day!

There was no hesitation at Long Lake as I followed the flat trail, while admiring Chocolate Peak to the east, along the shore of the deep blue lake. It wasn't long before the path took me to the other side of the lake, then up and through lush meadows and small tarns to my right and left. I could see Spearhead Lake below at the 3.5-mile mark, and not long after that I was standing on the small wood bridge over Saddlerock Lake's outlet. Even at the end of the hiking season there still was a lot of water exiting Saddlerock Lake and tumbling down to the Timberline Tarns and beyond. On the west side of Saddlerock Lake stands 13,085-foot Mount Goode, and the high ridge that swings around to the southwest to Bishop Pass. Definitely the star in the neighborhood, Mount Goode is photographed often because of its austere jagged rocks atop its mighty summit.

I passed Bishop Lake at the 4.2-mile mark on the right and began, what I consider, the best part of the 5.7 miles to the pass. The climbing begins immediately on large granite steps as the view back down canyon opens up, exposing all the lakes in one simply gorgeous vista. Absolutely breathtaking! I paused for a moment on one of the switchbacks to watch a furry little American pika scurry in and out of the huge boulders, apparently gathering materials to furnish its winter home.

I encountered the only snow I saw all day approximately 100 feet from 11,972-foot Bishop Pass as the wind picked up dramatically, creating a high-pitched whistling sound that dogs would consider deafening. I bundled up with every piece of clothing I brought, and then made a bee-line for a huge rock I saw up on a knob to the south. Overlooking a small lake below 13,893-foot Mt. Agassiz, I ate snacks with chattering teeth while continuing an unintentional tradition that will undoubtedly extend for years to come.



The perfect lunch spot below 13,893-foot Mt. Agassiz at Bishop Pass.

Perfect day on Hurd Peak

CRAIG JACKSON
COLUMNIST

As the clouds dispersed, the sun came out and revealed this majestic mountain scene from the summit of Hurd Peak.

Photo by Craig Jackson

(Hiked on Sep8. 28, 2019)

It was a cloudy day in South Fork Bishop Creek Canyon with ominous skies above and a forecast for some type of precipitation. One of those small storm systems that pass through with no fanfare whatsoever, possibly a few sprinkles and minor gusts of wind. I knew ahead of time that work was going to be slow on this day, so I brought my hiking gear with me to, just in case. It was 10:30 a.m. and I was already finished with my daily work duties, so I hit the road and headed up to South Lake.

While driving up South Lake Road and passing Bishop Creek Lodge, I could see a large cluster of very dark clouds at the head of the canyon. As I approached Parchers Resort on the left, rain drops started falling on my windshield. Uh oh. Fortunately, by the time I reached the parking area for the Bishop Pass Trail at South Lake, the showers had subsided, but the dark clouds were still threatening overhead.

Even though the skies were dark, it was still September and the temperature wasn't dramatically low. Without any hesitation at all, I hurriedly started up the trail next to a very full South Lake. The aspens were starting their fall transformation, changing from green to yellow, making a great start to my hike. In less than an hour I arrived at Long Lake and immediately left the trail at its north end. This is where the fun began.

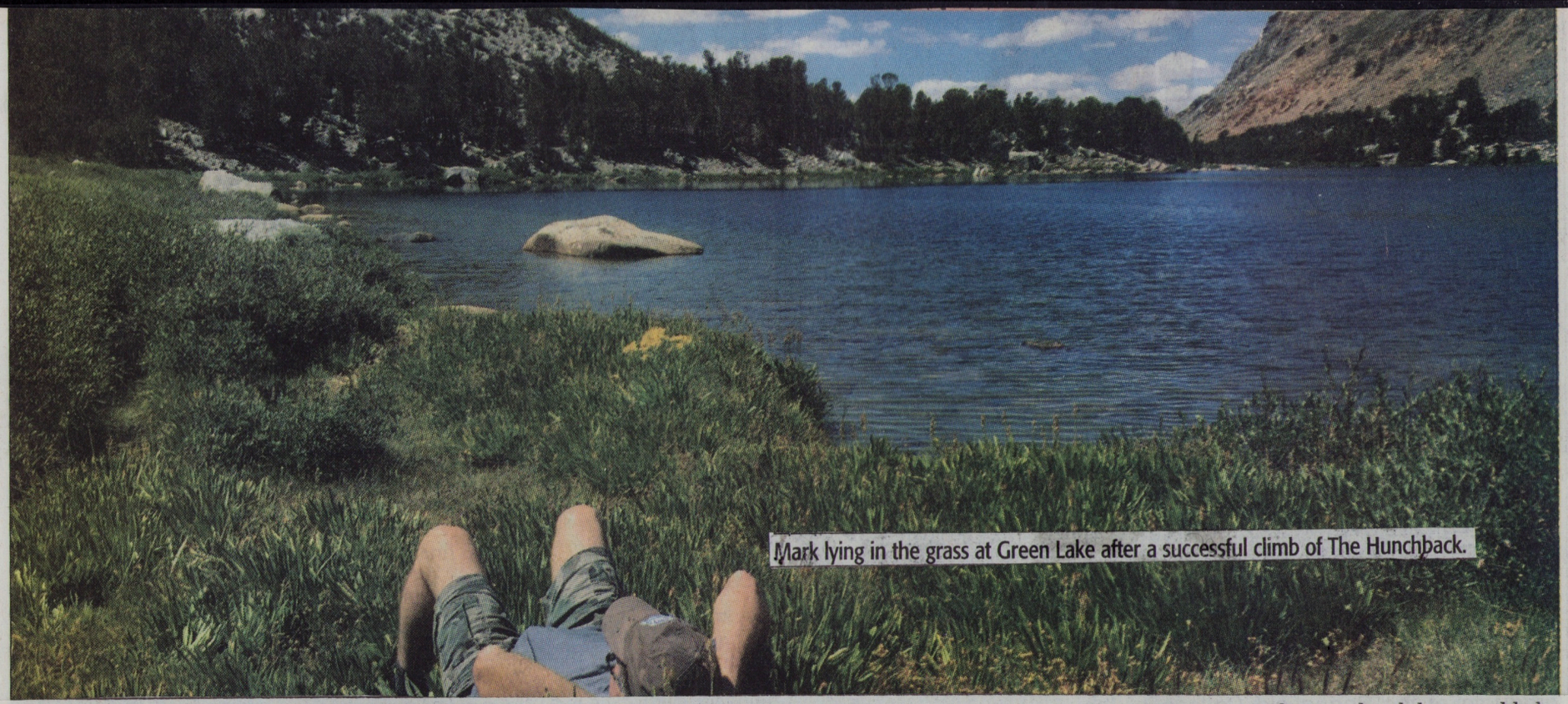
I followed a use trail through an obvious camping spot, crossed Long Lake's outlet on three well-placed rocks and started cross country to a specific chute high up on Hurd Peak's eastern slope. Before getting there, I had to climb some steep granite slabs to a wooded area, before beginning the steepest part of the hike.

I can describe the few hundred more feet of climbing easily; a lot of loose dirt and rocks with some Class 3 scrambling over and around large boulders. The sky was magically starting to clear up as I took one step at a time. It took about 45 minutes for me to make it up the chute and arrive at the summit, and it was worth every step. The view was spectacular! I could see Long Lake below to the east and the Treasure Lakes below to the west, as well as Cloudripper, Vagabond Peak, Mt. Goode and Mt. Agassiz, near Bishop Pass.

As the clouds cleared quickly, the wind picked up, shortening my stay at the summit significantly. I signed the summit register (for the second time in five years), and started down the same way I came up. It was a beautiful descent, to say the least and I could feel the warmth of the sun as I boot-skied down the chute to the granite below. From there, it was more descending until I reached the creek crossing at the end of Long Lake.

I was enjoying myself so much at that moment that I decided to sit down on a fallen log and take in the view of Long Lake and all of the surrounding peaks. After 30 minutes of mountain meditation, I slowly hiked back down the trail, enjoying each and every second. All in all it wasn't a long hike, but it sure was memorable.

(Craig Jackson is a Bishop resident and avid hiker/backpacker who enjoys exploring his new backyard after having relocated here in 2013 from Southern California. Email him at Sierracj51@gmail.com.)

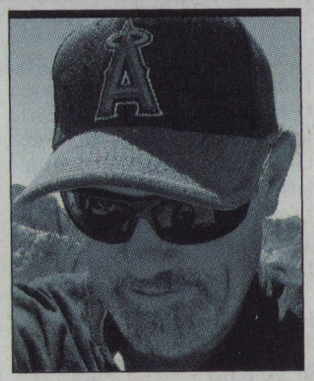


Mark lying in the grass at Green Lake after a successful climb of The Hunchback.

(Hiked on Aug. 24, 2019)

Built in 1928 to service travelers in automobiles heading up South Fork Bishop Creek Canyon to Parchers Resort and South Lake, historic Bishop Creek Lodge has served fishermen and hikers for almost 100 years. Nestled perfectly amongst aspen, Jeffrey pine and cottonwood trees on a east facing slope, the resort has been pleasing customers for many decades. And that's exactly where we spent the weekend celebrating my son Kevin's 28th birthday two months ago.

I was the first one of my family to arrive at the rustic rainbow cabin at BCL on the Thursday



CRAIG JACKSON
COLUMNIST

before my son's birthday, seeing as I only had to drive 22 miles from my home in Bishop. Everyone else was driving up from Orange County and down from Reno, with the mandatory stops along the way, delaying them slightly but not too late. Once they arrived at BCL, we all enjoyed a couple of spirits and discussed which hike we would be doing the next day. I suggested we hike up from South Lake to Green Lake, then continue up the trail and climb The Hunchback, at 12,307 feet, and enjoy the magnificent 360-degree view. After some further discussion, it was decided that my brother Mark, my son Kevin (and his dog Vedder) and myself would be having the most fun the next day in the High Sierra.

Feeling slightly hung over and exhausted the next morning, the four of us left BCL at 8 a.m. and drove the 4.7 miles up South Lake Road to the upper parking area at South Lake. It was a warm late August morning in our eastern Sierra, and all of us were extremely excited to be able to spend some quality time together.

We started out by going around the black locked gate at the top of the parking area, walked a few steps up a mild slope then jumped on the old water pipe heading towards Green Lake. I felt great and full of energy at this point while my big-city-livin' son and brother seemed to be sucking wind ferociously. I chuckled to myself at their struggles, but knew darn well they would both make it to the top of The Hunchback.

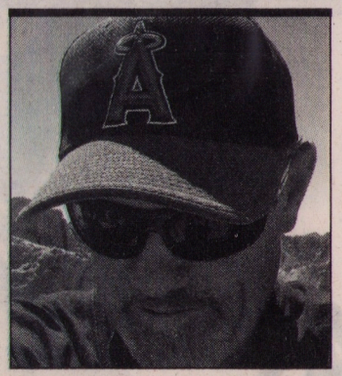
Two miles from the start, and 1,000 feet higher, we emerged from a small stand of aspen trees into some magnificent open and level terrain, just below Brown Lake. Glancing to our right at the full lake, we didn't hesitate and continued another mile up to larger Green Lake. Again, not stopping to take pictures or rest, we forged ahead to the steepest portion of the hike, and the fun-nest.

Our views of the surrounding mountains began to show exponentially, from Mt. Tom to Mt. Lamarck near Lamarck Col and Mt. Haeckel rising high above Lake Sabrina. Sublime, to say the least. The trail then took us to a massive plateau, known as Grunion Flat, with our destination straight ahead.

I took the lead, put my head down and led us across the level terrain to The Hunchbacks' south ridge. Within minutes we were all together, and very soon thereafter standing on the apex simultaneously, one big happy family! We hung out up there for at least two hours, talked about anything and everything, then started back down the trail. More fun followed later at Bishop Creek Lodge, where we had a great weekend and a memorable birthday celebration.

(Craig Jackson is a Bishop resident and avid hiker/backpacker who enjoys exploring his new backyard after having relocated here in 2013 from Southern California. Email him at Sierracj51@gmail.com.)

(Hiked on Nov. 2, 2016)



CRAIG JACKSON
COLUMNIST

It is entirely possible to do the same hike multiple times and have an absolutely different wonderful experience each and every time.

There are many factors involved that contribute to a great or not-so-great outing into the wilderness. It's always a good idea to check the weather forecast for the location where the hike is going to take place because conditions can be very deceiving in the higher locations of the Sierra Nevada.

For this sojourn I headed back up to South Lake for a climb up The Hunchback, near Coyote Ridge and above Green Lake, for possibly the last hike of the season near the Bishop Pass Trail (Road Closed sign is on the road past Bishop Creek Lodge as of Nov. 21).

The trend over the last couple of hikes continued this time as I pulled into an absolutely empty parking lot at South Lake on a clear but very cool Wednesday morning. The plan for the day was to hike up the old water pipe from South Lake and connect with the Green Lake Trail that originates at Parchers Resort, then follow it up a few switchbacks to an open meadow area before arriving at Brown Lake, followed by Green Lake at the three-mile mark. I would remain on the trail past Green Lake up to Grunion Plateau and climb The Hunchback with spectacular views of the Palisades covered in fresh snow.

What has become a usual thing of late, I pulled into a ghost town-like parking lot at South Lake just before 9 a.m. and parked at the last spot in the upper backpackers parking area, right next to the trailhead and the newly painted black gate. During the summer hiking season this parking lot is full of cars with some folks having to park in an overflow area a mile down the road near Parchers Resort but not this time of year when no one seems to be hiking. It's kind of an eerie-good feeling knowing that you're possibly the only person for miles enjoying the spectacular scenery of our beloved Sierra Nevada.

The cold air was obviously present as it smacked me right in the face when I opened my car door and began preparing for the day's adventure, equipped for any weird weather or other winter-like obstacles. I took one last look back at the snow-covered peaks above South Lake and the clear blue skies above, before circumventing the black gate and starting up the old water pipe.

From the parking area it only takes a few steps on the 100+-year-old pipe to forget about civilization and feel like you're in a primitive medieval forest, with no other sound but the wind blowing through the trees and hiking boots making low sounds with each and every step on the rusted pipe.

There was a nice snowdrift on The Hunchback's south ridge, with the Palisades looming behind.

Photo by Craig Jacks

I left the comforts of the pipe at the one-mile mark and turned right on the Green Lake Trail and immediately began a set of steep switchbacks to the top of the ridge. The path snakes through a ravine that was devastated by an avalanche many years ago, evidenced by all of the downed trees, making the trail hard to see in spots. I left the ravine via two short switchbacks and entered a live forest and the first sight of lots of snow. There were some fresh boot prints in the two inches of powder but they didn't last long as they came to an abrupt halt and reversed direction. I was now on my own.

Two miles from the trailhead I arrived at an ice-covered, snow-surrounded little Brown Lake, looking good decked out in its winter attire.

I continued sloshing up the trail for another mile and happily reached an unfrozen Green Lake with snow lining the sandy shores. I've hiked to Green Lake many times and I can honestly say that every time it's a differently wonderful experience, this one ranking towards the top.

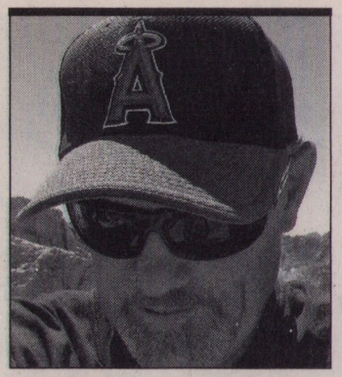
Most folks opt to turn around at this point and therefore miss out on what's a few hundred feet above at the top of the ridge. I topped out above on Grunion Flat and all I could see was a sea of white with snow as far as the eye could see, from the Palisades to the south and the Evolution Region to the west. Pure heaven!

The Hunchback was only about a mile from here but had a steep south ridge that was covered in snow, making the climb more interesting than necessary.

I arrived at the summit and was completely mesmerized by the winter-like terrain all around me, from 14,000-foot peaks and canyons in every direction. I found mine and my son's name in the summit register, dating back to Sep. 12 2012, and enjoyed lunch a over 12,000 feet. After ove an hour at the top of The Hunchback, I followed my boot prints back to Green Lake, onto the old water pipe and back to my car, still the only vehicle in the parking lot.

(Craig Jackson is a Bisho resident and avid hiker/ backpacker who enjoys exploring his new backyard after having relocated here in 2013 from Southern California. Email him at Sierracj51@gm

(Hiked on Nov. 5, 2016)



CRAIG JACKSON
COLUMNIST

Two and a half years ago I had taken one of my first hikes in the Sierra Nevada after moving to Bishop from Southern California and was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to share an outdoor experience with perfect strangers. It has now become an annual tradition to revisit the very first Sierra Sojourn, which premiered in *The Inyo Register* back on July 5, 2014. It's been a real blast writing these short columns and it helps me to remember distinct points about each and every hike.

The hike to the Tyee Lakes starts in the South Fork Bishop Creek Canyon, passes by four different lakes, goes over Table Mountain and ends at the Sabrina Basin Trail above Lake Sabrina. The highest lake is less than four miles from the trailhead, with the lowest lake two miles up and 1,500 feet higher. The first couple of miles are pretty steep, but after that the rest is quite enjoyable with views opening up along the way. My plan for the day was to hike up to the fourth lake then follow the trail up to Table Mountain and have lunch at a perfect spot.

It was an extremely cold morning on the drive up Highway 168 out of Bishop and it was even colder when I made the left turn onto South Lake Road. It was 34 degrees outside but there no clouds in the sky, meaning today's adventure would be cold yet very exciting. I've been up this trail before when there's been a lot of snow and that was fun, so I was happy and anxious to get to the trailhead.

Bishop Creek Canyon sees thousands of visitors throughout the year, but when fishing season is over and the campgrounds and resorts are closed for the season, there's an eerily fantastic feeling in the air. No cars and no people, just nature at its frigidest best. Two miles past the Bishop Creek Lodge, on the right hand side, is the Tyee Lakes Trailhead, clearly marked with a trailhead sign and a wood bridge over South Fork Bishop Creek. My hike started at roughly 9 a.m. with a very strong breeze blowing down the canyon and into my face, with not another vehicle to be seen, another quiet hike in the mountains.

The trail starts out moderate at first and then begins the switchbacks, gaining close to 1,500 feet under a forest canopy with great views above Bishop Creek Canyon. It took about an hour to hike the first two miles and arrive at half-frozen Tyee Lake No. 1, a small lake with some grassy sections near the shore. The first snow appeared on the uphill portion of the trail between Tyee Lake No. 1 and No. 2, nothing too bad to make me turnaround but enough to get me thinking about it.

A view of the solid ice at Tyee Lake No. 4 on this perfect day.

Photo by Craig Jac

Tyee Lake No. 2 is becoming more and more like a meadow each and every time I hike by it, but this time it was covered in snow and partially iced-over. Before reaching lake No. 3, I always notice a small lake off the trail to the south and wonder if that is part of the "Tyee Lakes" or just another lake with no association. I continued slushing and sloshing up to Tyee Lake No. 3, a lot bigger than the first two and oddly ice-free while the trail had about five inches of un-walked-on-before powder. The fun continued through the snow for the last quarter of a mile before arriving at the best lake of them all, Tyee Lake No. 4.

I love this lake. Once I was lucky enough to see trout spawning up the small inlet stream on the south side, sitting there for hours marveling at the course of nature taking hold before my eyes. This time it was too cold to marvel for long, so I decided to end the hike here, enjoy the winter scene and hike rapidly back to the trailhead.

(Craig Jackson is a Bish resident and avid hiker/ backpacker who enjoys exploring his new backyar after having relocated her in 2013 from Southern California. Email him at Sierracj51@gm

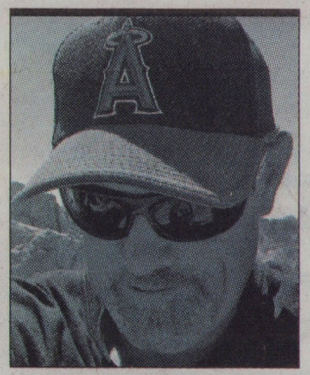
sun some good places to get out and have a great time, even when it's ice cold outside and it seems like everything is wet and muddy. I guess it wouldn't be an adventure if it wasn't. Some of those spots include the Volcanic Tablelands at the north end of Bishop, the Owens River Gorge to the west, the foothills in the White and Inyo Mountains to the east or an old mining road on the side of Mount Tom in South Round Valley. Any of these locations would be a good day of hiking, but I was looking for a nice climb, with some snow included, to a "view to end all views." I knew exactly which hike to do.

For the third or fourth time now, Barri and I met at a familiar spot close to Pine Creek Road and U.S. Highway 395, approximately 9 miles north of Bishop. It was only 8:30 a.m. and not a cloud in the sky, perfect start to what would be a really nice day of hiking. Barri hopped into my car and we drove west towards Rovana, passing Round Valley Elementary School, and eventually turning left at the first street in the community. Another left then a quick right and we were in Round Valley and heading straight towards Mt. Tom. A mile and a half later on a rocky dirt road, I parked in an open spot next to the road.

Once again, it was an absolutely perfect morning in Round Valley, as the sun lit up the snow-covered slopes of 13,632-foot Mt. Tom

Barri striking a pose on the Fifth Switchback Plateau, after a nice hike in the snow.

Photo by Craig Jackson



CRAIG JACKSON
COLUMNIST

and the stillness in the air could be silently heard. We were both ready to go as soon as we parked, overly anxious to be on a trail on such a beautiful winter day.

Barri and I started up the dirt road, enjoying the scenery all around us and having a very nice conversation. It's wide open out there, no trees for miles, just knee-high brush as far as the eye can see. It didn't take long to reach the Power Line Road, where we continued straight ahead on the old mining road that traverses the east side of Mt. Tom. The going was quite easy for the first mile, but then the switchbacks kicked in.

After a short break, we continued up the side of the mountain, now hiking in 1 to 3 inches of fresh snow. It was a blast! In the meantime, we were fortunate to see some pretty interesting animal tracks in the snow. We weren't absolutely positive what we saw, but we believe there were coyote tracks, bobcat, roadrunner or golden eagle, possibly young bear, sage grouse and of course, California mule deer. It was a lot of fun trying to figure out which animal was recently walking the same path we were.

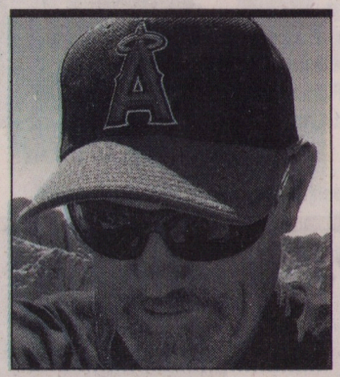
An hour and a half after starting out, we were at the end of the vehicle dirt road, where the snow was now much deeper, but we weren't ready to turn back just yet. The old mining road, built for mules decades ago, became more of a trail at this point with snow up to our knees. We marched on, reaching the fifth switchback then leaving the road altogether, making our way up a 50-foot slope to a breathtakingly beautiful level area seemingly placed there for a specific reason. The view from north to east to south left us speechless, as we found a cluster of rocks overlooking the immenseness of it all. It was truly inspirational. We had lunch there, explored the entire area and had a very nice time some 3,000 feet above Round Valley.

(Craig Jackson is a Bishop resident and avid hiker/backpacker who enjoys exploring his new backyard after having relocated here in 2013 from Southern California. Email him at Sierracj51@gmail.com.)

After a short break, we continued up the side of the mountain, now hiking in 1 to 3 inches of fresh snow … we were fortunate to see some pretty interesting animal tracks in the snow.

Round Valley snow romp

(Hiked on Jan. 6, 2017)



CRAIG JACKSON
COLUMNIST

Over the last month and a half there have been a number of storms that have passed through the valley bringing much needed rain and snow. Last weekend was one for the books as a cold and wet storm covered the entire area in a fresh blanket of snow. Streets that are dry almost every day of the year were slushy and snowy, like it is most winters in Mammoth Lakes. The best part of this whole situation in my opinion is that the Sierra Nevada is getting massive accumulations of snow, which will end up filling the higher lakes and streams to their maximum capacity resulting in great hikes this summer. As for hiking at this time of year under these difficult circumstances, the choices are severely limited to flat dry terrain or snow hiking.

I'm sitting here on Sunday looking out the window at snow-covered roads under very dark clouds and water dripping from the trees onto the slush below. Good thing there's playoff football on or I think I might go stir crazy not being able to get outside, it's a good thing the 6th was a clear day. I took advantage of the sunshine and headed out to one my favorite winter hiking spots in Round Valley near Horton Creek.

I started driving north on U.S. Highway 395 out of Bishop for four miles and turned left at Sawmill Road. After a few feet I turned right on South Round Valley Road and set it at cruising speed for the next five miles until arriving at the left turn up to Horton Creek Campground. The normally dry road was completely covered in 4 to 6 inches of snow so I chose to pull over next to the power poles and begin the hike from there.

I can honestly say that I have hiked on this road hundreds of times now and have not seen another person once, which bewilders me. The views are spectacular while the walking is mostly flat for the first 1.5 miles and doesn't get tougher the next 1.4 miles. The ground was covered in hard-packed snow up to 5 inches on the ground, only the fourth or fifth time I've had the pleasure of strolling through Round Valley with snow under foot.

I noticed some movement to the east and about 200 yards away I spotted a small herd of mule deer seemingly enjoying the snow or they were just being deer. This old road, no longer vehicle worthy, used to be discernible until reaching the main road through S. Round Valley but the spring has taken over while the vegetation has advanced, almost obliterating the road in spots. On this hike the spring was frozen and with the sun shining brightly, made for a picture perfect setting.

This is the view while hiking on a frozen spring in the heart of Round Valley.

Photo by Craig Jack

There wasn't one brown area on this side of Mount Tom as every square inch was a magnificent white, meanwhile I crossed the spring and followed another road to the spot where the spring emerges from the ground, roughly three miles from my car. This road still is accessible by motor vehicles and is a popular spot for off-roaders to come out and enjoy a weekend day.

I usually have lunch near the same boulder that has three sitable smaller rocks beneath it, 100 yards up from the spring beneath Mount Tom with extreme panoramic views of Round Valley and the Owens River Gorge, to name two. What's great about hiking in Round Valley is the navigation is simple with unobstructed views, whether on an old mining road or wandering aimlessly for hours through the waste-high vegetation. I left my lunch spot and returned on the west side of the spring following coyote and deer tracks through a maze of game trails back to the power line road in the center of S. Round Valley. It took another hou to get back to my car and after a great half day of hi ing I was fulfilled, albeit with cold feet.

(Craig Jackson is a Bisho resident and avid hiker/ backpacker who enjoys exploring his new backyard after having relocated here in 2013 from Southern California. Email him at Sierraci51@gmail.com)

romp near Rovana

(Hiked on Jan. 24)
2015

The community of Rovana, or Pine Creek Village, is a small enclave located about 15 miles northwest of Bishop near Pine Creek. Built originally to house workers from the now defunct Pine Creek Tungsten Mine, today it is a small hamlet near Round Valley at the base of the Sierra Nevada.

Most people simply pass through Rovana on their way up Pine Creek Canyon to either Pine Creek Pass trailhead, Gable Lakes trailhead or Morgan Pass trailhead without realizing there are plenty of places to hike near Rovana.

During the warm summer months, when it's extremely hot in Round Valley, I'll drive right through Rovana to get to the trails in the Sierra Nevada. But during winter, when snow covers the trails higher up, I absolutely love getting out into Round Valley and wandering cross-country, or on one of the dirt roads, until dusk. Originally graded to get to the Lambert Mine on Mount Tom, the main road in Round Valley goes from Rovana to Horton Creek Campground with a junction that heads steeply up to the Lambert Mine. If you have a 4-wheel drive vehicle, it is possible to drive to the end of the road, making for a shorter hike.

To reach the start of the hike from Bishop, drive north on U.S. Highway 395 for nine miles and turn left on Pine Creek Road towards Rovana. Make your first left on North Round Valley Road, drive about a mile and then make a right on Vanadium Road. Drive exactly 1.2 miles west on Vanadium Road to an unnamed road on the left. This is the original road to the mine that goes deep into Round Valley. Turn left and head slightly downhill to where the pavement ends. Decision time: You can park here and start hiking up the road or drive a high-clearance vehicle further up and park or a 4-wheel drive as far as you can go. Since I love hiking and only have a high-clearance, two-wheel drive Explorer, I drive up the dirt road about a mile and park at a large turnout on the right side. From this spot, you can see the road as it heads up the side of Mount Tom.

Start hiking on the dirt road as it bumps and grinds its way towards Mount Tom. Pass a road on the right that runs parallel with the power lines and then make a right on the road that goes west towards the mountain.

Begin climbing a steep switchback and then start walking on a long stretch of road heading south. Views of Round Valley, the Owens River Gorge and the White Mountains open up the higher you walk. Gain elevation quickly as the trail leaves the valley floor and heads up the mountain. Be sure to keep an eye open for small or large herds of California mule deer as they graze and rest in the valley below and the mountains above.

Continue climbing steeply up the road until it and abruptly ends. You may want to call this your turn-around point and lunch spot if you started back down in the valley. If not, go forward on the old mule trail as it starts more than 30 steep switchbacks to the top of the ridge and eventually the Lambert Mine.

At the end of the fifth switchback, there is a use trail that leads steeply up to an outstanding plateau with breathtaking views of the Owens Valley. I've personally been up here a few times and have made it up to the 27th switchback but ran out of energy and trail. If anyone's actually made it up to the mine itself, I would like to here about it and see some pictures.

Whichever option you choose, either hike up the road or utilize a four-wheel drive vehicle, enjoy the cool breeze and the spectacular views before returning to the start.

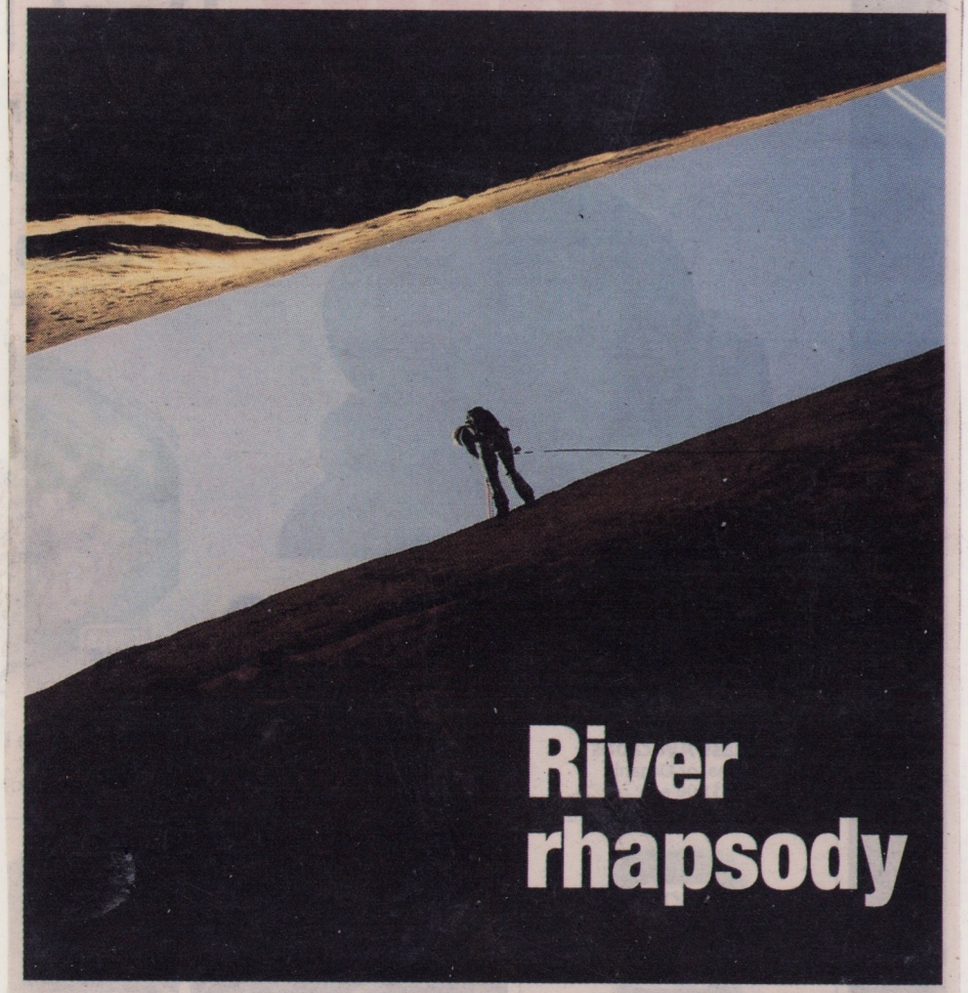
AT A GLANCE:

- Two- to eight-mile round-trip hike, depending on start point
- 500- to 2,000-foot elevation gain, depending on start point
- Wildlife sightings possible
- Colder the higher up you go; bring warm clothes
- Stay clear of any mine shafts
- Possible snow; pick a clear day to go

Looking down at Rovana from the plateau.

A lone tree at the fifth switchback with the road below.

OFF THE TRAIL



River rhapsody

Photo by Wendilyn Grasseschi

A climber in the Owens Gorge. Photo/Wendilyn Grasseschi

By Wendilyn Grasseschi

1-29-2015

The Owens River Gorge is that big slash in the ground thousands of feet deep to the east of U.S. 395 that drivers pass by at 70 mph and almost no one but climbers and boulders seem to know as the bit of late winter paradise that it is.

The Owens River is a mild river as rivers go; no big rapids, no raftable whitewater, no big drama—most of the time.

In the gorge, however, the river goes a bit crazy.

It disappears from sight and plunges for 19 miles right through hundreds-feet-thick pink, volcanic Bishop tuff, roaring and crashing through the canyon like a caged animal.

You can see the line of the river driving the Sherwin Grade on U.S. 395, a hard, dark slash of deep brown to the east, roughly paralleling the highway.

Down at the bottom of this hard dark line of cliffs and boulders, the river crashes and clamors and rumbles over endless waterfalls, cutting its way through almost 3,000 feet of elevation as it drops from Crowley Lake (6,900) feet to Bishop (4,100 feet).

Down there, in the bottom of this deep and narrow gorge, the river runs clear as light between soft, pink walls that tower hundreds of feet above it.

The world down there is of another time and place from the colder, higher, drier desert high above.

Down there, it is warm, humid. The sound of canyon wrens and swifts skitters up and down the pink walls. The incense smell of cottonwoods and wet sandy beaches is a balm in the desert.

By mid-March, the water in the river gets warm enough to swim in and the sun gets high and the shadows deep and there is no better place to be.

Once, not so long ago, this river ran truly wild and free, raging at spring melt with hundreds of gallons of sweet water per second, crashing through the tight gorge, tearing out beaches and cottonwoods and doing the spring cleaning thing that rivers always have done.

Then, mid-century, the city of Los Angeles began diverting the water in the Gorge into the city aqueduct, leaving behind a devastated fishery and a dying river.

The river ghosted into nothing, the channel became choked with weeds, and the fish and dragonflies, the coyotes and night-hawks, the owls and the clear-voiced swifts disappeared. It almost died, this river, it almost died in the big, sharp, white bowl of the now-dry Owens Lake.

But today is alive once more, after locals fought for it and after a court order just a few weeks ago forced Los Angeles to permanently restore enough water to maintain a viable fishery.

Granted, it has changed dramatically.

It doesn't run at 200 cubic feet per second any more, tearing though this narrow gorge, ripping out cottonwoods and boulders and dropping sand for new beaches.

It's not like that now and maybe, it will never be again.

But it is alive, it is deep and green and cool and wet on a hot spring day and for now, that's enough.

■ To get there, take Gorge Road east of U.S. 395 (north of Bishop and just north of Birchim Lane Road) and take a left at the "T," in the road, then follow this paved road along the DWP aqueduct pipeline a few miles until you see a group of cars parked in a rough, rocky parking area on the right at the rim of the gorge, with a chained gate just behind the parking area.

Vehicles can go no further but the road is open to non-motorized use. Walk past the chain and down the paved road to the bottom of the gorge.

wendilyn@mammothtimes.com

The soothing sounds of nature

Great view of Lake Sabrina, Mt. Emerson and the Piute Crags from the George Lake Trail.

Photo by Craig Jackson

Another early start last Friday had me pulling into a parking spot for the Sabrina Basin Trail, a half mile below the dam, at 6:45 a.m. It was a lot chillier than I expected, and a lot windier. There was no snow for the first mile as I passed the turnoff on the left to George Lake. Meanwhile, two Clark's Nutcracker's swooped down towards me squawking, creating a very cool echo effect against the steep mountain walls.

CRAIG JACKSON
COLUMNIST

The wind continued to howl through the tall pine trees, but what drowned that sound out was a roar coming from the trail ahead. I rounded a bend and there it was, George Lake's outlet, loud and boisterous pouring over the trail and down to Lake Sabrina. The large rocks that are usually exposed, and used to help cross the creek, were now under fast moving water. I found a strategically placed walking stick and utilized it to help me rock hop across the creek, only getting my boots partially wet.

Surprisingly, there was still no snow on the trail at the 9,500-foot mark. With a little over a mile to go I reached a section of switchbacks on a north facing slope and there it was, a snow covered trail for as far as I could see. Since I didn't have my micro-spikes, and really wasn't looking forward to a slog in the snow, I continued any way. The snow pack this time of year was more hard-packed and icy, and with only older hiking boots on, I decided to come back in a month and stroll up to Blue Lake instead. Now what to do?

I thought about hiking the 3-mile round trip Inlet Trail that starts and ends at the boat landing at Lake Sabrina, but since I was already near the trail to George Lake, why not give it a shot. A re-crossing of George Lake's outlet netted one wet boot before I turned right and began the steep climb up the ridge to George Lake. The wind seemed like it was getting stronger as I huffed and puffed up the switchbacks, ultimately reaching snow coverage at the 10,250-foot mark. It continued up the entire drainage, so this is where I stopped.

I found a nice rock to sit on overlooking Lake Sabrina, and spent some time quietly reflecting on whatever popped into my head. The birds were singing while the creek musically cascaded next to me, the perfect way to spend a day off.

(Craig Jackson is a Bishop resident and avid hiker/backpacker who enjoys exploring his new backyard after having relocated here in 2013 from Southern California. Email him at Sierracj51@gmail.com.)

Down in a gorge

An old powerhouse, lifeless and abandoned, sits idly at the bottom of the Owens River Gorge.

It was the last day of winter and I was looking for a short hike with interesting elements, and that's when the Owens River Gorge came to mind. It had been more than three years since my last trip down the gorge and I was looking forward to getting back. To get to the trailhead I started out northbound on U.S. Highway 395 from Bishop and drove 11 relaxing miles to the Gorge Road exit. I immediately came to a T-intersection and turned left, then followed the narrow road for 3 more miles to a right turn and a large parking area at a locked gate. Since mine was the only car present at the time, I pulled right up to the gate as if I were first in line.

There was not one cloud in the sky last Monday as I filled my water jugs, had a small snack and started down the power plant road. That's right, this hike is different from most as it starts in a downhill fashion for the first mile, as it descends about 500 feet to the gorge floor and meets up with the Owens River. Besides the sound of the rushing river on my right, the gorge was inundated with what appeared to be violet-green swallows flying around like jet fighters, while squawking and screeching. I stopped and watched the chorus of harmony for a few minutes, amazed at how agile these little birds are.

The road generally ascends slightly as it heads up the gorge, passing bush-covered concrete foundations that supported some types of structures decades ago. I could hear voices that seemed far away, but as I looked closer at the canyon walls I could see climbers scaling the shade-covered vertical areas. I observed them for a few minutes before heading up the trail, soon discovering an old, forgotten powerhouse sitting lonely next to the Owens River. There were still a few wood shingles on the roof but every window appeared as though they had been shot out a long time ago.

Parts of the Owens River in this section look almost like some of our creeks that come down from the High Sierra, cascading over large rocks and boulders, making spectacular splashes in the cottonwood tree-lined river. It's hard to believe that this is the same stream that we all see down in the valley, meagerly meandering at a snail's pace through the lush Owens Valley.

The trail reaches a spot on the river where it is apparent that a vehicle bridge once spanned the river at the 2-mile mark. Instead of crossing here I found one of the many climbers bridges downstream and found the perfect spot to kick back and have a Subway sandwich. I listened to the melodic sounds of the river, watched some red-winged blackbirds for a while and enjoyed the tranquility of the Owens River Gorge.

(Craig Jackson is a Bishop resident and avid hiker/backpacker who enjoys exploring his new backyard after having relocated here in 2013 from Southern California. Email him at Sierracj51@gmail.com.)

"The girls had great improvement against a very tough undefeated in league

the Owens Gorge

(Hiked on Feb. 2)
2015

The Owens River and its tributaries, Glass Creek and Deadman Creek, are the headwaters for the famed Owens River System, a world renowned fishery which beckons fishermen and other adventurers to the rugged landscapes of the Sierra Nevada. With its headwaters beginning at the 11,600-foot summit of San Joaquin Mountain, the eastside draining waters contain more than 100 seeps and springs that sustain some of the most abundant riparian habitat in the eastern Sierra.

The relatively low elevation ridge along the Sierra Crest allows moisture from Pacific storms to funnel over this area. The abundant moisture has created an island of wet meadows among the forested ridges in the dry eastern side of the Sierra Nevada. It is these clear and cold springs which sustain this celebrated river system.

In 1941, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power constructed the Long Valley Dam at the head of the Owens River Gorge as part of a hydropower project and also to control flooding in the Owens Valley, creating Crowley Lake.

From Crowley Lake, the river descends quickly in the Owens River Gorge. The gorge is a beautiful, serene and steep 10-mile long canyon with a vertical drop of more than 2,000 feet. The Long Valley Dam removed all water from the lower Owens River for almost 40 years. In 1991, a limited amount of flow was released into the gorge to recreate the riparian habitat and re-establish a brown trout fishery while maintaining water for hydropower diversions. The Owens River Gorge is also extremely popular with rock climbers and the trail through the gorge is exceptional, with beautiful scenery alongside a magnificently flowing river.

To reach the trailhead from Bishop, head north on U.S. Highway 395 for about 12 miles and turn right on Gorge Road. This paved road is opposite the exit to Paradise/Swall Meadows and is marked with a small wooden sign that says "Gorge Power Plant." At the stop sign at the end of Gorge Road, make a left. Drive 3.3 miles north and turn right. Park at the turnout on the right before the closed yellow gate.

Start hiking down the paved road as it descends gradually for approximately 300 feet in just less than a mile. At this point, the road becomes level with the Owens River and then begins a very gradual climb for the next 0.6 miles. On the right, next to the river, is the first old abandoned power house and shortly after that, a functioning power plant that is operated by the LADWP.

Just beyond the operating power plant, the paved road now becomes more of a dirt path. Pass a small outhouse on the left, but first take some time here to stop and marvel at the climbers ascending the steep canyon walls on either side of the river. I hiked here last Monday and watched in amazement as climbers scaled the vertical walls of the gorge.

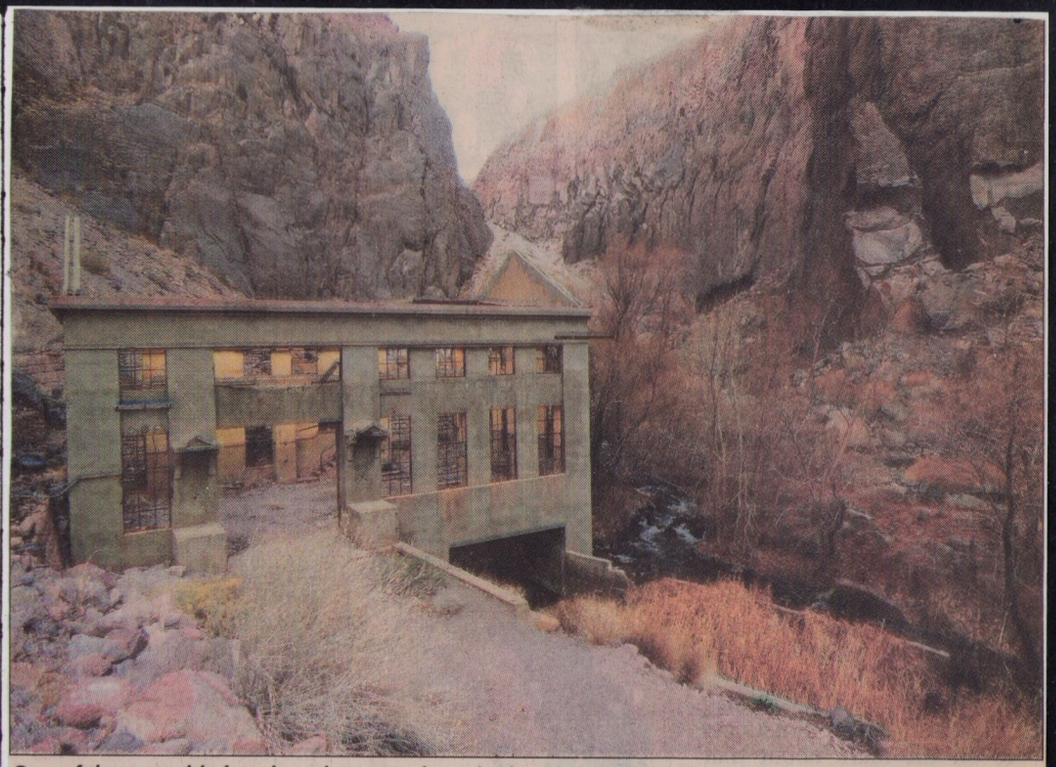
Two miles into the hike, pass the second abandoned power house on the right and come to a trail junction and a decision. You can either take the high trail on the left as it heads up canyon or stay here and explore this magical area. If continuing up the trail, take the left fork and then look for a small wood bridge across the river in 0.1 miles.

From the river crossing, the trail becomes less recognizable and a little harder to follow. At just under 3 miles, encounter a stream crossing on some slippery logs. This may be another spot to turn around since the trail goes uphill to a road in the last half-mile.

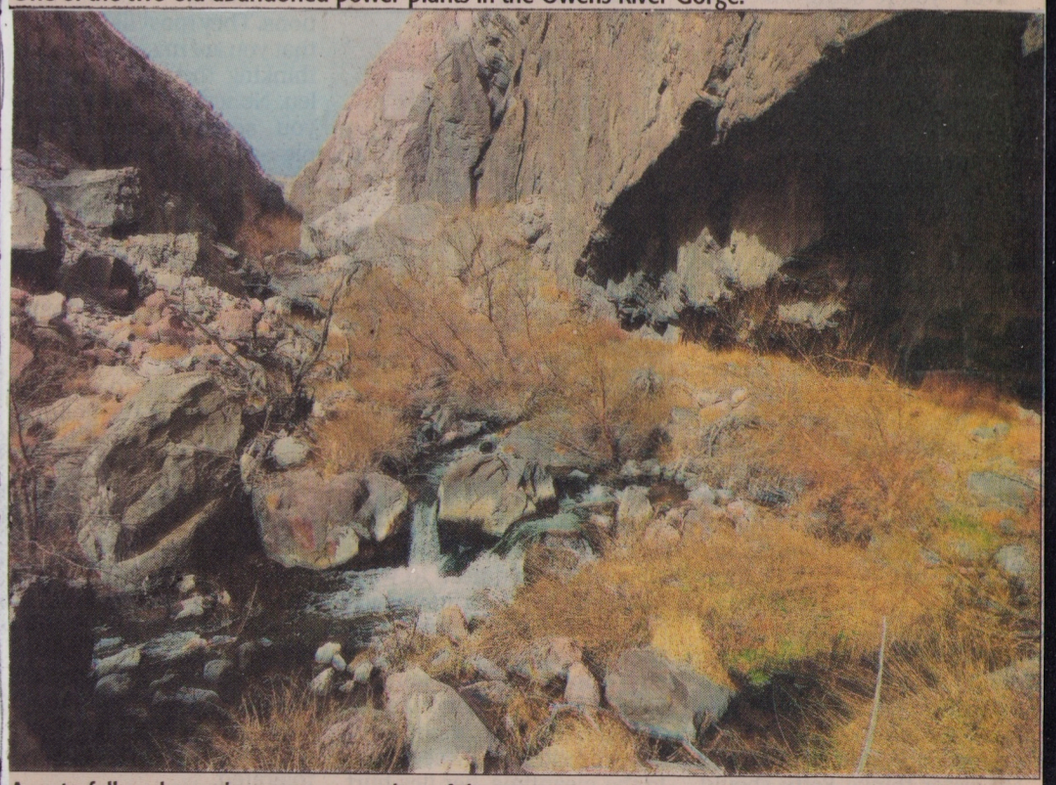
I turned around before the end of the trail and spent over an hour and a half exploring just past the second abandoned power plant. Instead of going uphill at the aforementioned junction, head down the short road towards the river and stone hut. Look for a small, but sturdy, wood bridge. Cross the bridge and follow a use-trail as it meanders near a cave and back near the river. The cascading Owens River is deafening at this point as it heads down canyon amid small waterfalls and quick-moving rapids. Find a nice lunch spot here and enjoy the magnificent sounds of nature before heading back down, and then up to the trailhead.

At a glance:

- Fast-moving Owens River, stay out or cross carefully
- Watch climbers scale vertical walls
- Gets very cool in the shade, bring warm clothes
- Magical sound of the Owens River and plenty of fish



One of the two old abandoned power plants in the Owens River Gorge.



A waterfall and cave in a narrow portion of the gorge.

Sabrina Basin

(Hiked on May 31, 2015)

Sabrina Basin is one of my favorite places to hike in the Eastern Sierra. The trail starts near the dam and climbs the headwall at the southern end of Lake Sabrina to a wonderland of absolutely gorgeous lakes set amongst glacial scoured basins and surrounded by a sea of dramatic, jagged granite peaks. From higher up in the upper lakes basin, dramatic views encompass a very impressive list of 13,000-foot peaks along the Sierra Crest, including Mt. Thompson (13,494 ft.), Mt. Darwin (13,831 ft.), Mt. Powell (13,364 ft.) and Mt. Haeckel (13,418 ft.).

The trail system throughout Sabrina Basin consists of established and maintained trails as well as some lesser used and harder to follow routes. Hiking options vary from a short, albeit strenuous, 3-mile hike to Blue Lake, to overnight backpacks exploring each of the lakes' basins. With an early start and plenty of necessary supplies, strong day-hikers can plan a trip to see several incredible lakes, as well as mountain vistas, in the lower and upper basins. Whichever hike you choose you'll not be disappointed.

To reach the trailhead from Bishop, drive west on West Line Street, State Route 168, for 18 miles to a few parking spots at the trailhead just below the dam at Lake Sabrina.

The Sabrina Basin trail begins on the left side of the road next to a large trailhead sign that has an informative map. The trail starts out wide as it heads uphill through thickets of aspen trees. The trail narrows as it follows the left shore of Lake Sabrina.

After a mile of relatively level walking the grade increases on the shadeless trail before you reach the junction to George Lake at 1.3 miles. Just beyond the trail junction, cross the vigorous outlet to George Lake and then start some wonderful switchbacks and riprap stairs.

At 2.3 miles from the trailhead, come up and around a corner and stop to admire the outstanding view of 13,418-ft. Mt. Haeckel as its magic summit points skyward. This is a great spot to take a break and some pictures of the sweeping 360-degree vistas all around. Look down west to some cascading waterfalls on the Middle Fork and back at Lake Sabrina.

The trail continues its uphill swing as it turns east into a wonderful boulder-filled ravine. Enjoy some well-manufactured short switchbacks on this section before gaining the top of the headwall and arrive at the north end of beautiful Blue Lake. Look for a bunch of logs placed together at Blue Lake's outlet and carefully cross these logs to the other side.

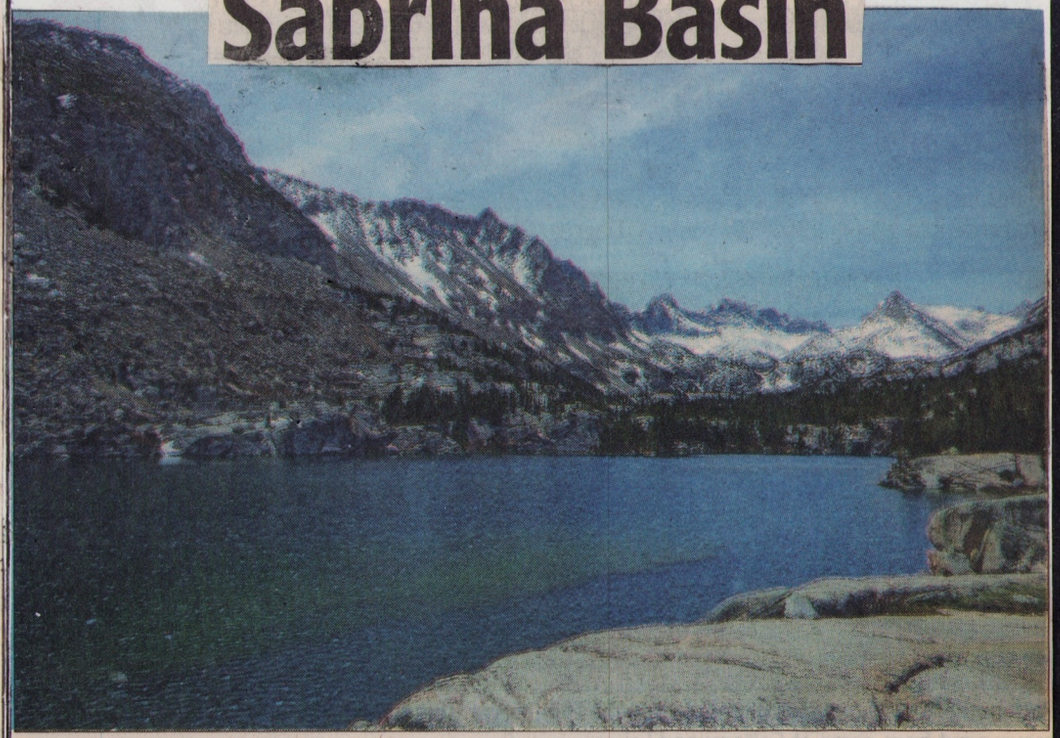
The trail can be somewhat hard to follow here, look for some rocks lining the path and soon thereafter, place your boots on a well-worn dirt trail. Last weekend I had to help a few people find the right path to take as they had never been up this trail before. Follow the undulating path along the shore. There are good spots at the 3.1-mile mark for lunch and also relaxing before continuing up to the next lake. Keep hiking mildly uphill on some granite and very soon arrive at a junction. A right turn leads to Dingelberry Lake, Midnight Lake and Hungry Packer Lake. There is a sign on a tree pointing straight ahead to Donkey Lake. Walk straight ahead on the unmaintained trail to Donkey Lake.

Careful hiking now on a trail that goes up and over some granite and through the forest for one mile past Blue Lake, or 4 miles from the trailhead, and arrive at Donkey Lake. There are two unnamed trail junctions before reaching Donkey Lake, be sure to continue forward. Just before the lake, there is a signed junction pointing left to Donkey Lake.

You'll see the lake down to the left, so leave the trail and pass a few rock cairns and then arrive at the shore above Donkey Lake. Find a perfect spot here, enjoy the views and then return the same way you came. Adventurous hikers can follow the creek up to Baboon Lakes, which is a half-mile farther with a 400-ft. gain.

At a glance:

- 6 miles round trip to Blue Lake with a 1,300-foot elevation gain
- 8 miles round trip with a 1500-ft. gain to Donkey Lake
- Beautiful lakes with sweeping vistas
- Good camping and fishing opportunities
- Be prepared for possible thunderstorms



Blue Lake is three miles from the trailhead and has some good camping spots.

At 10,580 feet, the coolness of Donkey Lake is therapeutic.

Sabrina

The serene beauty of iced-over Lake Sabrina, three weeks before fishing season begins.

Middle Fork Bishop Creek below the dam at Lake Sabrina.

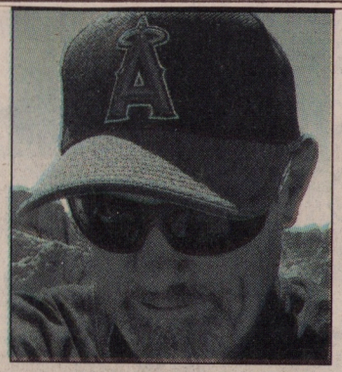
(Hiked on April 3, 2016)

Three weeks from today is the official first day of fishing season in the Sierra Nevada.

This means that the quietness of winter and early spring will soon come to an end as the herds of diehard fishermen descend on our hometown and clamor the shores of places like Intake II, North Lake, Bishop Creek and Lake Sabrina.

But for now the crowds have yet to arrive, leaving these spots quiet and still, just how I like them. Last Sunday I made a last-minute plan to hike up to Lake Sabrina and enjoy it before it is bombarded with cars and humans.

This is a great time of year to spend in the mountains as the temperature slowly increases in the valley.



CRAIG JACKSON
COLUMNIST

I hadn't been up Highway 168 for a couple of weeks when I left Bishop close to 11 a.m., driving westbound with Mount Tom and company basking in the midday sun, still retaining a good amount of snow. A few miles later, the road enters Bishop Creek Canyon as there is a noticeable decrease in temperature and a brisker breeze.

Fifteen miles from Bishop, I passed the left turn to the Bishop Creek Lodge and South Lake then entered the community of Aspendell a couple of miles later. I parked in the large clearing at the locked gate just beyond the town.

This was my fourth trip up to Lake Sabrina since the gate was closed at the beginning of last winter but the first time I wouldn't be hiking up the road in the snow.

I prefer hiking this time of year in the snow up to Lake Sabrina and North Lake but I wouldn't encounter any until passing the North Lake turnoff.

The first half mile of the walk is the steepest part, with welcome relief upon arriving at Middle Fork Bishop Creek and the small Sabrina Campground on the right. I left the road here and walked through the campground, next to the creek.

Beyond the campground there is still a good amount of snow on the road and the surrounding area. It's so quiet this time of year, with the only sounds heard are the wind through the trees and the creek rolling downstream.

I crossed over the new, old-looking bridge near the sensitive riparian area, passed the Sabrina Basin trailhead, then a few steps later arrived at the dam at Lake Sabrina.

It was a glorious Sunday afternoon at 12:30 p.m. as I was the only soul around with the entire lake to myself. The lake is still covered in ice while the surrounding peaks and mountains have a lot of snow blanketing their slopes.

I walked the length of the dam, taking pictures and putting my sweatshirt on to battle the stiff breeze coming off the lake. It was still early so I decided to hike around the west side of the lake as far as I could. The shore was dotted with patches of snow, making the walking quite enjoyable.

I found the perfect boulder to plant myself on while admiring the grandeur of the Sierra Crest and munching a delicious peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

Shortly thereafter, I laid down comfortably on my back, put my hands behind my head and closed my eyes for a few minutes, totally caught up in the moment.

At the conclusion of my brief nap, I packed up and started heading back down the road. A brief stop by the creek below the dam produced some pretty nice pictures.

Winter is a wonderful time to see Lake Sabrina as the crowds are non-existent and the road is usually covered in snow, instead of vehicles.

All of that is about to change soon as fishing season brings throngs of happy, money-spending visitors to our neck of the woods.

But in the meantime, the pure quiet and solitude makes for a perfect day's outing.

(Craig Jackson is a Bishop resident and avid hiker/backpacker who enjoys exploring his new backyard after having relocated here in 2013 from Southern California. Email him at Sierracj51@gmail.com.)

SABRINA

Great view of Lake Sabrina, Mt. Emerson and the Piute Crags from the George Lake Trail.

Photo by Craig Jackson

Looking down at Emerson Lake on the right and Piute Canyon from Peak 12320, 900 feet above Piute Pass.

Photo by Craig Jack

With a trailhead elevation of 9,250 feet, and 11,423 feet at Piute Pass, the 2,200-foot gain is spread out nicely over the five and a half miles. There are moderate gains here and there along the way, with some very enjoyable level spots next to the spectacular lakes higher up in the canyon. Pleasantly, the trail starts out moderately through a rich pine forest, making its way uphill on the south side of the jagged Piute Crags. I crossed, and then re-crossed the creek on a sturdy wood bridge at the 1.3-mile mark, then emerged from the forest and began some nice switchbacks.

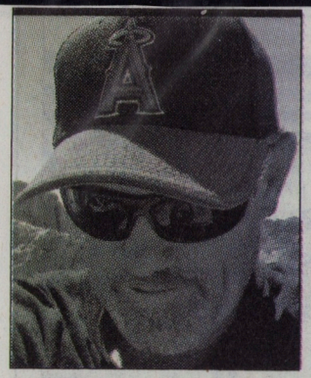
After gaining a few hundred feet at this point, the trail crossed over a small stream and entered a short, steep section with some large granite steps thrown in for good measure. From previous experiences I knew I was almost at Loch Leven Lake, 3.1 miles from the trailhead. After a well placed dip in the trail, I caught first sight of the lake, and also first sight of Piute Pass, just over 2 miles up canyon. I paused for a moment to take a couple of pictures of the early morning reflection on the still water, eager to keep going up the trail. From here the trail rose gradually for the next mile before arriving at large Piute Lake, 4.2 miles from the start.

With Piute Pass within reach now, I put my head down and went, completing the last mile and a half to the 11,423 foot summit. The view is absolutely breathtaking, with Muriel Peak to the south, massive Humphreys Basin to the west and 13,986-foot Mount Humphreys looming large to the north. Originally, I had planned on cruising a short distance to Muriel Lake and exploring there, but instead opted to go straight up from the pass to Peak 12320. It's a nice 900-foot climb in less than a mile, over some boulders and definitely worth the effort. I reached the summit ridge at 9 a.m. and was greeted with an outstanding 360-degree view. The ridge hiking was a lot of fun, but when I got to the summit the old register that was there four years ago was gone. I looked everywhere but couldn't find it. Bummer!

The refreshing breeze blowing up from the canyon below felt wonderful on my skin, as I sat and munched some cantaloupe and grapes trying to name all the peaks I could see. After a healthy snack on the summit, I took a leisurely descent downhill, past two glacial tarns and then back to Piute Pass. Many breaks followed on the return trip, stopping numerous times to take in the beauty of the High Sierra.

2018

(Craig Jackson is a Bishop resident and avid hiker/backpacker who enjoys exploring his new backyard after having relocated here in 2013 from Southern California. Email him at Sierracj51@gmail.com.)



CRAIG JACKSON
COLUMNIST

(Hiked on Nov. 11, 2019)

I love the hike up to Piute Pass, it's definitely one of my many favorites here in the Eastern Sierra. It has everything, from tall majestic peaks to a handful of pristine lakes and streams, which make it the ideal Sierra adventure destination. I've been up this trail so many times now that I can't guess exactly, probably somewhere near 50 and I must say I never get tired of it. Camping in Humphreys Basin a few years ago with my brother was a blast, while climbing peaks to the southwest of the pass has given me so many great memories to appreciate forever. Sometimes, when I'm looking for a relaxing and non-stressful hike, I'll head up to Piute Pass, take a side trail for a mile and go to "my spot" on the north shore of Muriel Lake. Well, that was the plan that day, until I changed my mind at the last minute.

The short drive from Bishop to the trailhead parking at North Lake took a mere 30 minutes on a beautiful mid-November morning. Yeah, it was cold but I knew ahead of time that there was zero chance of precipitation and the sun would be shining brightly all day. Although, my backpack still held all of the items required to hike in the Sierra Nevada in November. I was prepared to have a great day and another adventure.

After walking the half mile from the parking area to the trailhead, and passing a closed and quiet campground, I started up the Piute Pass Trail, seemingly alone and very happy. Through the trees the trail took me for the first mile, then emerging in warm sunlight directly below the Piute Crags. Quite a sight indeed, especially when the sun hits the jagged rust-colored pinnacles in a particular way.

I subsequently followed a handful of delightful switchbacks, then continued on the trail as it dropped slightly to a narrowly-visible creek, which I crossed over and began a series of granite steps upward. I could hear the North Fork Bishop Creek on my left and it sounded great. Not long thereafter, I caught my first glimpse of Loch Leven, the first lake on the trail, and Piute Pass in the distance, about three miles away.

Between Loch Leven and 11,423-foot Piute Pass, the terrain looks like something imagined. Meadows with creeks and springs flowing here and there, waterfalls, majestic pine trees and large granite boulders seem to follow with every step. I arrived at large Piute Lake and actually paused for a short break. Had to, it was stunning. A half dozen pictures taken here and off I went.

Reaching the ridge of Peak 12320, looking down at Emerson Lake and Piute Canyon.

Photo by Craig Jackson

Still not seeing one other human being at this point, I approached the final push to the pass, which to me is the most enjoyable part of the ascent. Upon arrival I looked up to the left and recalled a hike five years prior that put me on the summit of Peak 12320 and an amazing view of the Wonder Lakes below. Without hesitation whatsoever, I aborted the simple plan to hang out at Muriel Lake, instead opting to head straight up 900 feet to the ridge above.

At the beginning, large rocks dotted the landscape, which made for easy hiking, but that would change in a hurry. I went up an obvious chute on the left, taking me to the low point on the summit ridge. It was exhilarating, to say the least. I could see the highpoint to the south and immediately started for it.

The ridge portion to the summit was extremely fun, and arriving at the top was even more rewarding. Under a pile of well-placed rocks, I found a glass jar with a rusted lid containing a 35-year-old summit register. Placed there by notable peakbaggers Gordon Macleod and Barbara Lilley in summer 1984, there had been only a few signatures over the last three and a half decades.

I marveled at the views all around me, from massive Mt. Humphreys to the north and Mt. Darwin and Mt. Mendel to the south. I actually enjoyed lunch for over an hour, then began the short climb back down to Piute Pass. I certainly felt a cold breeze on the way back, a sure sign winter was coming soon.

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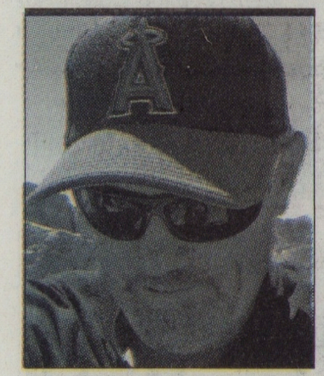
Sierra Sojourns

A relaxing hike turns into a hell of a climb



CRAIG JACKSON
COLUMNIST

(Hiked on April 12, 2020)

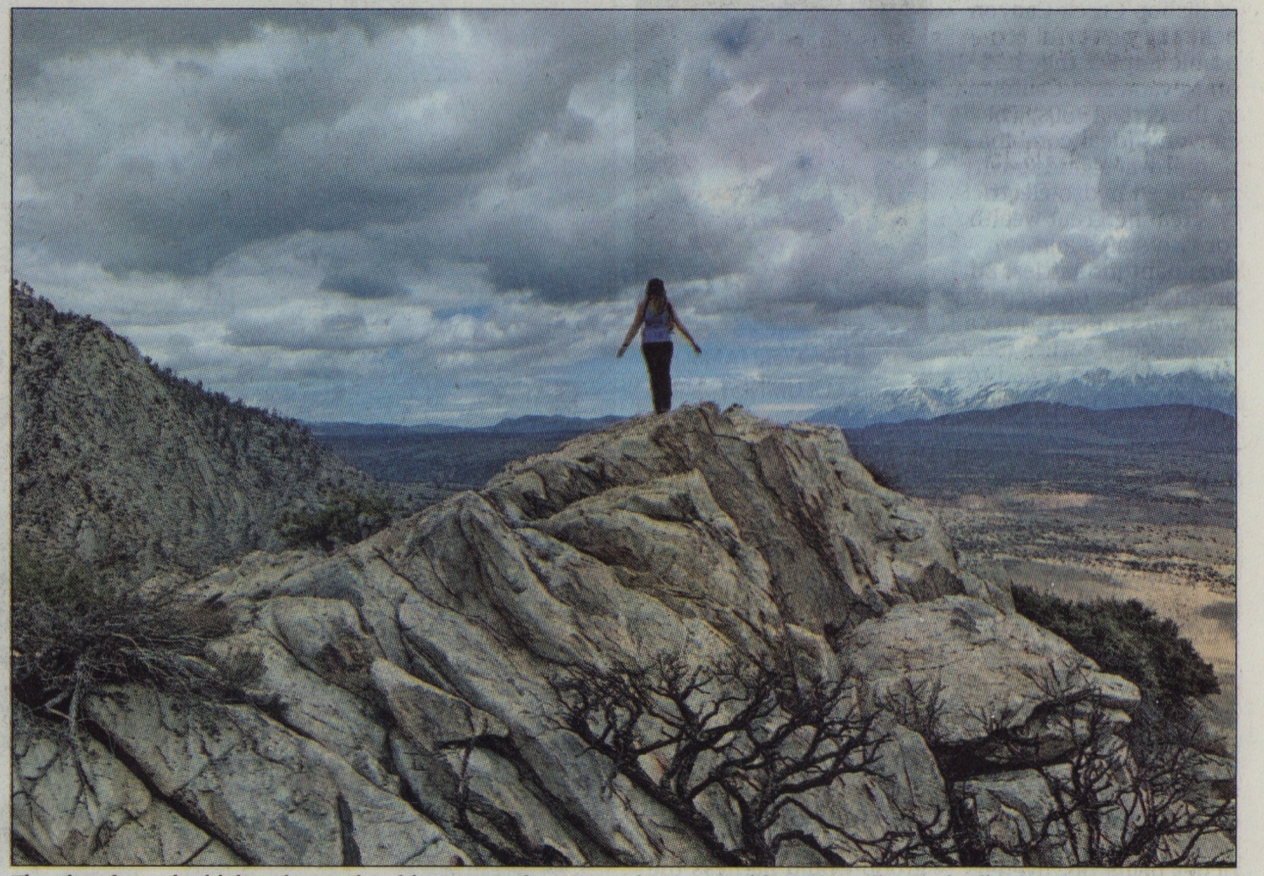
For the last few Sundays, hikes have been planned based solely on past experiences. Honestly, it's been a lot of fun hiking or climbing to a place I've never been before. From a hike in extremely windy conditions to a mine west of Big Pine or an obscure peak in the White Mountains, our adventure two weeks ago was no different. It started somewhere I've wandered many times, but ended in a spot I never thought I would be.

For the fourth weekend in a row, Sarah, Peter and I made plans to hike and do some off-roading in a spot we'd never been to together. Following a brief discussion, we all decided to forgo another day in the Tungsten Hills and venture to a spring and explore a ridge to a high point in North Round Valley near Wheeler Crest.

It was cloudy with a chance of precipitation on the morning of our hike, absolutely perfect spring weather for an adventure. I met Peter and Sarah at Pine Creek Road and Lower Rock Creek Road promptly at 8:36 a.m. and headed northbound to Birchim Lane, where we turned left. It's about a mile drive to the small community of Forty Acres, where we turned right on North Round Valley Road.

Turning from pavement to dirt, it was another mile or so to our left turn on single lane dirt Ranger Station Road. Up to this point, the road was smooth and easy, but that would soon change. A mile from North Round Valley Road, Peter and Sarah followed me for the next couple of miles over a narrow, dusty and sometimes rocky road to its terminus, a half mile from the base of Wheeler Crest.

I suggested beforehand we wander north to a spring and explore that area, but Sarah wanted to gain some elevation and go straight up the slope, and that's exactly what we did. It was a short walk across open terrain to the trail-less incline, aiming for a high point some 2,000 feet above, in less than two miles.



The view from the high point on the ridge was truly spectacular, we could see for miles and miles.

Photo by Peter Carey

My excuse for lagging behind at the start was the fact that I was tired from our hike the day before. That's my story and I'm sticking to it. For the next hour or more I slowly made the arduous climb, with Sarah energetically leading the way and Peter right behind her. It was a battle, but I finally made it to the summit ridge, just as the first raindrop fell. It was monumentally spectacular up there, we could see the entire White Mountain Range to the east, miles and miles of the Owens Valley, a massive canyon below to the west and many intense jagged peaks on Wheeler Crest.

For the next hour and a half I sat at least 10 feet away from Peter and Sarah as we enjoyed a great lunch, humorous conversation, an extremely loud rock slide across the canyon and world-class views. A perfect way to spend a Sunday in the Eastern Sierra.

(Craig Jackson is a Bishop resident and avid hiker/backpacker who enjoys exploring his new backyard after having relocated here in 2013 from Southern California. Email him at Sierracj51@gmail.com.)

COLUMNIST

(Hiked on May 10, 2020)

One day after our hike to the summit of Red Mountain, Sarah, Peter and I were ready to find another trail to walk on, and another dirt road to drive on. Again, Peter came up with a great idea; drive out to Buttermilk Country and hike up beautiful Horton Creek Canyon to Lower Horton Lake. It would end up being a cold Mother's Day at Horton Lake, but the fun we had up there made up for any weather related discomforts.

As usual lately, we met up at a designated spot, this time it was Buttermilk Road and SR168, west of Bishop. The sun was lighting up the high peaks of the Sierra Nevada in front of us, a perfect gateway to what would be another memorable day with my good friends. Peter and Sarah took the lead and I followed closely behind as we rambled up bumpy Buttermilk Road for 7 miles before turning right on the signed road to the Horton Creek trailhead.

At this point, the road got quite a bit rougher and rockier, but our Subaru's handled it without problems for most of the way. We parked off the road less than a mile from the trailhead, in a perfect spot for our cars. It was a few minutes before 8 a.m. as we started hiking up the road. I'll admit it, I was tired and had slightly sore feet from our 18-mile effort the day before, but almost immediately I was awoken by the sheer beauty of the scenery up the canyon.

Half-way iced over Lower Horton Lake was a scene we will not forget.

Photo by Craig Jackson

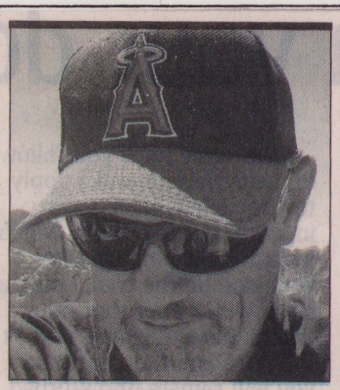
Sarah led the way up the old mining road while Peter and I followed closely behind for the first two miles. We stopped at the remnants of the Sonny Boy mine, took some pictures, had a snack and then continued up the trail. It was an amazing day already, full of color and fun, making for a memorable outing.

From our cars to the lake it's almost 5 miles and just under 2,000 feet of elevation gain, the perfect Sunday hike. We followed the old road up the north side of the canyon, with Horton Creek cascading to our left. Two and a half hours after starting out, our adventure took a left turn, past an old miner's cabin on our left and a large wood structure on the right. It was downright cold up there, with a stiff breeze blowing over the ice on the lake, but that did not bother us at all.

We found a great spot amongst the trees on some perfect sitting rocks, talked about our mothers on this Mother's Day and enjoyed some lunch and tasty cold beverages. It was one of those special moments we shared after a big adventure the day before, perfect medication provided free of charge by the Range of Light.

(Craig Jackson is a Bishop resident and avid hiker/backpacker who enjoys exploring his new backyard after having relocated here in 2013 from Southern California. Email him at Sierracj51@gmail.com.)

Hiking Horton Canyon



CRAIG JACKSON
COLUMNIST

West of Bishop there are many old mining roads and prospects where hearts were broken and wallets emptied. In Buttermilk Country there is evidence of mining activity all over the hills with roads leading every which way. The main road through Buttermilk Country, Buttermilk Road, is the original road that went to the Bishop Creek Drainage. Built at the turn of the 20th century, this road brought miners and supplies to the Wilshire Mine, known today as the Cardinal Mine near Aspendell. Seven miles up this road was the Wells Dairy Ranch. Miners on their way up and down the road would stop by the ranch for a cool glass of buttermilk (this is how Buttermilk Country got its name). The original road was used until the mid-1920s, when it was replaced by a road (State Route 168) built by Edison to supply its facilities up Bishop Creek Canyon.

Not only known for its mining history, Buttermilk Country has long been one of California's premier bouldering destinations with a long history of ground-breaking ascents and some of the proudest and most impressive lines in the world. These massive glacial erratic boulders sit in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada under an impressive lineup of peaks just a mere four miles to the west. At the west end of Buttermilk Country is a trailhead that leads up Horton Canyon on an old mining road to old mines, impressive peaks and beautiful lakes.

To reach the trailhead from Bishop head west on S.R. 168 (West Line Street) for 7.3 miles and turn right onto unpaved, but well-graded Buttermilk Road. Go 3.5 miles and cross a cattle guard where the road turns to single track. Stay straight on Road 7S01 as it heads west and then south. This portion of the road is manageable for most vehicles with moderate to high clearance. Low-slung vehicles will likely rub their undercarriage in places. At 2.5 miles from the cattle guard, turn right on rough and rocky Road 7S01A where there is a makeshift sign for Horton Trail. If driving a four-wheel drive vehicle, continue 1.1 miles to the trailhead at the gate. If not, look for a turnout 0.8 miles in where there is a group of aspens.

Start the hike on the old road at the trailhead sign that says "Horton Creek" and the old metal gate that crosses the road. As soon as you pass the gate, the road becomes more of a trail because vehicle traffic is prohibited beyond the gate. Extremely enjoyable hiking begins immediately with the towering hulk of Mount Tom directly ahead and Basin Mountain to the left. Begin ascending mildly on a number of switchbacks, remembering that this trail was originally built for mining vehicles.

Follow the rocky trail above the switchbacks in this arid terrain and look for lupine, mule ears, sulfur flower and mountain pennyroyal alongside the trail. At one mile, reach a grove of quaking aspens and push aside the branches to make your way through to the other side. Continue uphill with views of the White Mountains, Owens Valley and Bishop Creek Canyon. Continue gentle uphill hiking to the top of a rise at 1.6 miles and then enjoy a short descent.

Lower Horton Lake is 4.3 miles from the trailhead.

10-11-2014

At the bottom of the descent, look for a use trail to the right that leads to an old cabin and shed at elevation 8,500 feet, remnants of the Sonny Boy Mine Camp. Spend a few minutes here taking pictures of the site surrounded by aspens, Horton Creek, mining artifacts and two old structures. Leave everything as is and then return to the main trail. At two miles from the trailhead, cross Horton Creek on a wooden bridge and enter a verdant meadow with level walking. Barely visible past the bridge is the old road to the right that heads uphill on the side of Mount Tom to the Sonny Boy Mine site. I vow to someday come back and explore the old road and mine ruins, but for now it's onward up Horton Canyon.

The ascent begins to kick in again as the trail straightens out for a while and heads up canyon. On your left is Basin Mountain and straight ahead is gorgeous Four Gables at the head of the canyon. Arrive at a couple of switchbacks at 2.8 miles while enjoying the small waterfall on Horton Creek to the left. Between the waterfall and the trail the canyon floor is thick with aspen, willow and grasses in this serene environment.

Climb another switchback at 3.8 miles and notice to the left a small, marshy unnamed lake off the trail below. The road forks at 4.3 miles with the right branch leading steeply uphill to the Hanging Valley Mine site at 12,000 feet. Go left towards Lower Horton Lake. On the way to the lake stop at the abandoned buildings and mining equipment of the Hanging Valley Mine Camp and then arrive shortly at the shore of the lake. Half-mile-long Lower Horton Lake is a jewel, surrounded by jagged peaks, pristine quiet scenery and a perfect spot for lunch and a well-deserved rest. If energized and acquainted with off-trail hiking, consider following a faint trail alongside the lake's inlet for just over a mile and 1,200 feet of elevation gain to Upper Horton Lake. Enjoy the solitude, fall colors and cool breezes of Horton Canyon while retracing your steps back to the trailhead.

A SLIPPERY SLOPE

11-25-2017

Hikers observe massive Mule Deer casualties at Bishop, Shepherd's Passes

By Rea

Several large scale deer mortality incidents were discovered by hikers on Bishop and Shepherd's passes in the Inyo National Forest in the last two weeks, said Mike Morrison, Wildlife Biologist for the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Prior to the most recent storm to hit the Sierra, said Morrison, "the deer were following their migration trail and because of the heavy snow we got last year, there were big fields of it left unmelted. When it got cold it turned to ice and the deer just slipped to their death," said Morrison this week. He said that 78 deer had been counted dead on Bishop Pass, and 44 at Shepherd's pass as of Monday, November 20. However, he said, "it's very possible that there's a lot more mortality than we know about," because CDFW relied on hikers who reported finding the deer carcasses.

Lindsey Jackson told The Sheet that she happened upon a boulder field of dead deer below Bishop Pass on November 11. "When I first walked up on it, I was horrified," she said. At first, she said, she didn't understand what had caused such a mass die off of apparently healthy deer.

She said when she eventually ascended Bishop Pass she saw the reason for the carnage—a huge ice field above a chute. "I had to use my microspikes if I wanted to keep going," Jackson said. Jackson said that scavengers had already been at work, with crows circling overhead. "There were enough [dead deer] to mask the rocks," she said.

Morrison said that the phenomenon is not common, but it has been documented before. A paper titled "Accidental mass mortality of migrating mule deer" published in 2001 by West North American Naturalist and written by Vernon C. Bleich and Becky M. Pierce, cites events in that year, and in 1995 and 1954. "Snow, which is transformed to ice by frequent thawing and freezing, occasionally lasts through autumn at high elevations, and such would be expected following winters of heavy snowfall," stated the paper.

The paper also reported that public concern at the time led the authors to propose using hand tools to enhance the trail and cover it with sand, but permission at that time was denied by the Inyo National Forest "because it would conflict with 'natural processes' in wilderness."

Morrison said that migrating mule deer "are like lemmings. They could go around it, but their mama brought them that way and that's the way they're going. They step on the ice not recognizing it's going to be slippery. When they get to the point where gravity takes over, it's too late."

Morrison also said that it was too early to tell whether the mass mortality event would affect the amount of hunting tags issued next deer season. "We'll have to sit down and talk about that when the time comes," he said. "We don't want to issue a whole bunch of tags knowing there's going to be a low success rate for those fortunate enough to draw a tag." He said that it's the does (female deer) that drive populations, and that the mass mortality events this fall resulted in the deaths of "fawns, bucks, does, everything."

This unattributed photo made the rounds on social media as hikers reported mass casualties of mule deer on several high passes, including Bishop and Shepherd's pass.

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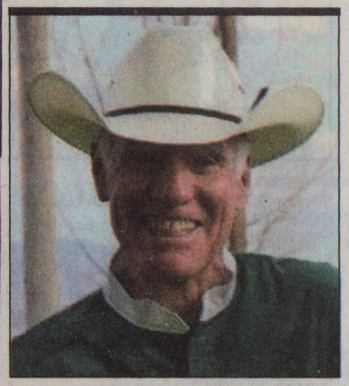
7-14-2018

Coyote

A little more of my musing on "contemporary" history will fill this column. I think I am becoming an old geezer before my time.

I was fortunate to get to tag along on the Yribarren Ranch cow drive to Coyote starting on June 25th and ending on the 29th. It was the first time cattle had been driven in to Coyote in four years. I had forgotten how much fun, and work, those drives are.



Rob Pearce, Ph.D.
COLUMNIST

I first went to Coyote on the cow trail when I was 12, 50 years ago, and last went about 33 years ago. The trail my family used to take cattle to Coyote is the trail that people now use to go to Ehganobie (currently known as Druid Stones - jeez how I dislike that new name). For several years, when I was high achool and college age, I went in to Coyote three times each spring with cattle, once with Conner Ranch, once with Yribarrens and once with my family. Conner and Yribarrens go the route down by Shannon Canyon, our family used the northern route.

Cattle and sheep drives in the Eastern Sierra, and the West in general, are getting fewer and fewer. People depend upon trucking, or are just losing grazing permits in the mountains as a result of environmental pressures. Kemps, Anchor Ranch, Deep Springs College, Flying M and several others still drive cattle into the mountains in this area, but there are less drives than when I was a kid for sure.

The drive to Coyote was so much fun. It was a chance for me to relive some of my youth, have one heck of a good time, meet new people and spend time with old friends. The crew this years was Ronnie, Nick E, Nickie B, Casandra, Kary, Roberto (from Peru), Lenear (from Peru), Wade, Devin, Yvette, Chuck, Cathy, Dick, Kevin and me. From the second day on there were a few less people, with eight riders, and three side-by-sides for all the way in to Sanger Meadow. We spent two nights on the trail camping out under the stars and eating and drinking like kings.

The trail isn't long, but it is a very steep climb, rising over 6,000 feet from the ranch to the highest point on the trail of over 10,300 feet. Total drive is about 12 - 13 miles (distances and elevations taken from topo maps). It is evident from the distance given and the number of days to travel that distance, that the drive goes very slow. Cattle climb slowly, and some places it is only a single cow wide trail. It simply takes a while to cover much ground. Cattle driving in the mountains consists of a lot of patience, hollering and prodding cattle along, but mostly, it takes patience.

Near Sugarloaf looking toward Sanger Meadow, from left, Rob, Lenear, Kary and Roberto. Cattle strung out in single file heading off the mountain to their destination and end of the drive. When things are going well on a drive cattle will "line out" mostly file and travel along. Casandra is taking the picture.

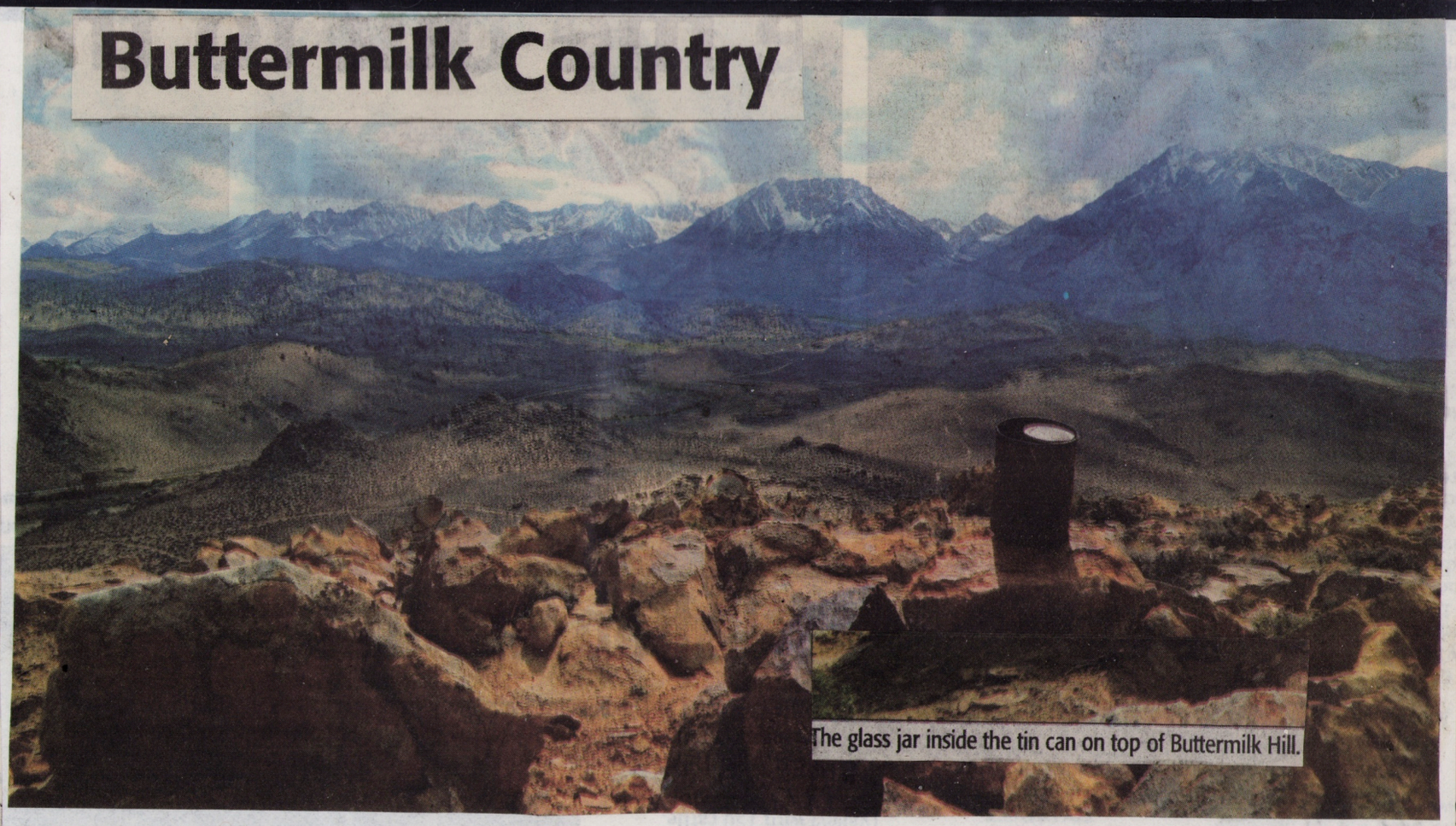
It was strange to me, but as many times as I had been up that trail most all of my memory of landmarks and trail location had faded. It is easy enough to know where you are, one can see the Valley, Coyote Peak, Sugarloaf and other large landmarks, but the subtleties of the trail have long since gone from my memory. Of our trail I can picture it almost in its entirety, where all the critical places were where people needed to be placed to keep the cattle on the trail and to keep them moving. Ronnie and Nickie have that knowledge of the Yribarren trial. Not much had changed since my last trip on how the drive went, well except for everyone had cell phones, I pulled out mine and used the topo to make sure I was in the right place more than once, some of us were posting to Facebook and sending pictures to friends, and the side-by-sides were new (last time we went our trail we took a pack mule for supplies - now it is side-by-sides). In reality though the skills needed to move the cattle are the same.

I am so happy I got to go. I posted pictures and a video of the drive on Facebook. There were lots of people who commented and who had memories of going up that trail over the years, clear back into the 70s. All of them hold their trips on the Coyote Drive as a fond memory. It really is a special trip to be a part of and be a contributor.

This Month's quote: do you ride for your m Tell me why do you ro for short pay; You ain' a'gettin' nowhere ; And you're losin' your shar Boy, you must have go crazy out there." Nigh Riders Lament, Michae Burton.

If you have any con tions for this column, p submit them to drrob9 excite.com or call me a 7856. Until the next co keep on ridin'!

Buttermilk Country



The glass jar inside the tin can on top of Buttermilk Hill.

Known worldwide for its spectacular bouldering and rock climbing adventures, Buttermilk Country also is a great place to explore old mines and hike all day. There's nice little peaks to climb right off of Buttermilk Road with possibly the best view of the big three west of Bishop: Mt. Humphreys, Basin Mountain and Mt. Tom. While others come here from miles around to climb some of the amazing large boulders, this hiker prefers to keep his feet on the ground and travel for miles exploring. Some summer days out in Buttermilk Country it looks more like a NASCAR race, with dozens and dozens of rock climbers (and their vehicles) lining Buttermilk Road and filling the small parking areas near the boulders. When you're a rock climber, the choices to do what you love to do are very limited, and the crowds can be overwhelming. But when you're a hiker, the spaces are wide open and solitude is inevitable.

Instead of driving the 20 miles to Aspendell, I had a last-minute change of heart as I approached Buttermilk Road. An immediate right turn and a quick pullout on the right in a dirt parking area had me exactly where I wanted to be. This is a familiar starting point and I didn't hesitate loading my backpack with munchies and starting down the dirt road in a northerly direction. Hidden in a canyon less than a mile from Highway 168 is a gem in Buttermilk Country, crystal clear and cold McGee Creek. Back in the day the old road somehow crossed over the creek, but presently there is a small path in the dense vegetation that can be easily missed. I started up the road on the other side, then quickly turned right on a use trail.

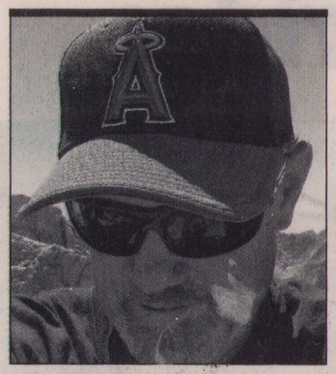
I climbed steeply straight up the mountain in front of me for 30 minutes, switchbacking around huge boulders before arriving at the summit ridge, some 550 feet higher. A few more feet later and there it was, the summit block on Buttermilk Hill. It's difficult to describe the view from here, all I can say is it's outstanding. From the Coyote Hills to the south and the white Mountains to the east, there's Bishop below and the Volcanic Tablelands north. But the stars of the show are the big three to the west in the Sierra Nevada, looking absolutely humongous from this vantage point. With Buttermilk Country in the foreground, this is a view comparable to Mt. Whitney from the Alabama Hills.

I signed the summit register that's in the glass jar, had a big drink of water and started down the west side past the two large mine shafts. I saw a smaller peak to the north and headed downhill to the saddle. There was some mining debris scattered about on the south slope, where the road ended and the trail began to the summit. This smaller peak had a bigger rock cairn on top with an old tobacco tin tucked neatly inside, covered by a half dozen rocks. I opened it slowly and immediately noticed a couple pieces of yellow-colored paper inside. It looked very old, and unfortunately the ink had been washed away and totally non-readable. Bummer.

A very delicious Subway sandwich was inhaled in no time as the wind started blowing harder and colder. Instead of going back the same way, I decided to make a loop out of the hike and climb a couple more smaller pinnacles. This was the perfect adventure, beautiful scenery and complete solitude.

An unfamiliar sight on Buttermilk Road

(Hiked on Jan. 24, 2017)



CRAIG JACKSON
COLUMNIST

The storm of the decade. That's what we kept hearing for a week leading up to the humongous storms that arrived on Jan. 20 and 22. The Friday snowstorm left a couple of inches on the ground while the Sunday bombardment left not inches but feet as low as Starlite and Buttermilk Country. Two days later I hopped in my car and headed west on State Route 168 for seven miles to Buttermilk Road. I figured someone would have driven up the road over the last two days making it a lot easier to hike in the two feet of snow that was out there.

Over the years I've driven up Buttermilk Road dozens of times to go on hikes in Horton Creek Canyon, climb Grouse Mountain or just wander in the many beautiful acres in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada. For the first time I decided to leave the car behind and hike up the road and, let me tell you, it was quite an experience.

I left home a little before 10 a.m., driving north on U.S. Highway 395 before turning left on Ed Powers Road. Three or four miles later I turned right on State Route 168 before making a right on snowbound Buttermilk Road. Normally there's a big dirt parking area on the right, but not this time. The parking area was covered in 2-plus feet of snow but thanks to a snowplow, I was lucky to park in a Yugo-sized parking spot, barely clearing the road.

The frigid air smashed into my face when I exited my vehicle, prompting me right away to reconsider my plan for the day. After contemplating for about a half second, I shouldered my backpack, put on every piece of clothing I had in my car and started up the road. The goal for the day was to hike up the road for three miles to the cattle guard and have lunch next to McGee Creek before coming back.

For the first mile the hiking was quite simple thanks to the deep tire tracks but the snow started getting deeper with every step. Also, the tire-flattened road was starting to lose its tire tracks as it was getting obvious that only a couple of vehicles had made it up this far.

It was kind of an eerie feeling being out in Buttermilk Country, which is usually very busy throughout the year with rock climbers, all by myself in multiple feet of snow. At the 1.5-mile mark, the tire tracks ended but there was a soft beaten track, apparently put there by some diehard rock climbers.

A snow-covered Buttermilk Road with Basin Mountain and Mt. Tom behind.

Photo by Craig Jacks

From here the hiking became a lot more difficult as I was knee deep and starting to sweat, causing my sunglasses to fog up to the point where I couldn't see clearly. Fun waning. With the sun shining brightly off the pure white snow, I could feel my face starting to burn while my eyes were temporarily blinded.

At this stage of the game I just about had enough and was looking for somewhere to sit down, woof down a sandwich and get back to the warmth of my car. I found a couple of huge boulders that fit the bill and that's where I concluded the uphill hiking. This definitely wasn't one of my best days but it really didn't matter, as long as I was outside.

(Craig Jackson is a Bishop resident and avid hiker/backpacker who enjoys exploring his new backyard after having relocated here in 2013 from Southern California. Email him at Sierracj51@gmail.com.)

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2015

Sierra Sojourns

Turkey Day Jaunt

CRAIG JACKSON
COLUMNIST

Located west of Bishop, Buttermilk Country offers one of the most diverse, renowned and accessible bouldering areas in the state. This very scenic and historical place has some of the best photo opportunities in the Eastern Sierra. Also, there are many old mining roads throughout the area leading to remnants of a time when mining was popular.

We left Bishop at 10 a.m. and headed north on U.S. 395 for a couple of miles then made a left turn on Ed Powers Road. Drove a couple more miles and turned right on Highway 168. Just up the road we made a right on Buttermilk Road and immediately parked in the large dirt lot on the right.

We started hiking down the old road next to the fence and descended slightly for a few hundred feet down to McGee Creek. There used to be a road that crossed the creek but that was many, many years ago. Today, there is a lot of dense vegetation alongside the creek, making it difficult to cross. There is a duck at an opening where it is easy to cross over the creek to the road on the other side.

We followed the old road up and to the right into a small ravine where the road goes west past a large mine shaft on the left. The road goes straight ahead but we made a right onto a nice use-trail that starts up Buttermilk Hill's south slope. The steep portion of the hike begins here as we made our way straight up the side. The views opened up the higher up we went with Mount Tom to the west and the Owens River Gorge to the northeast.

It took us about 45 minutes to reach Buttermilk Hill's summit ridge and shortly thereafter, we arrived at the large rock pile at the top. The 360 degree views were outstanding but the cold breeze limited our time at the summit. We took some pictures, signed the summit register and shouldered our backpacks before departing.

We started down the west slope, passing a couple of huge mine shafts before jumping on another old road that wraps around to the north. This is where we left the road and ran straight down to the saddle separating a peak to the north. The wind really began to blow but we were making good time so we decided to press on. We left the saddle and climbed the smaller unnamed peak to the north. It's lower than Buttermilk Hill but has a large rock pile at the top and an old tobacco can with old, non-readable paper scraps.

We were getting hungry for turkey, so we didn't stay long at the top before climbing back down to the saddle. We hiked around the west side of Buttermilk Hill, past an old 1920s Ford truck and onto a closed road. The pure solitude in this glorious place makes the wandering beyond enjoyable. More cross-country brought us back to the south side of Buttermilk Hill and the road we were previously on. We crossed McGee Creek, found the first road and before we knew it, we were back at the car at 1:30 p.m. The short 15-minute drive got us back early, unbelievable to some, and then we enjoyed an awesome Thanksgiving dinner. Perfect ending to a perfect day.

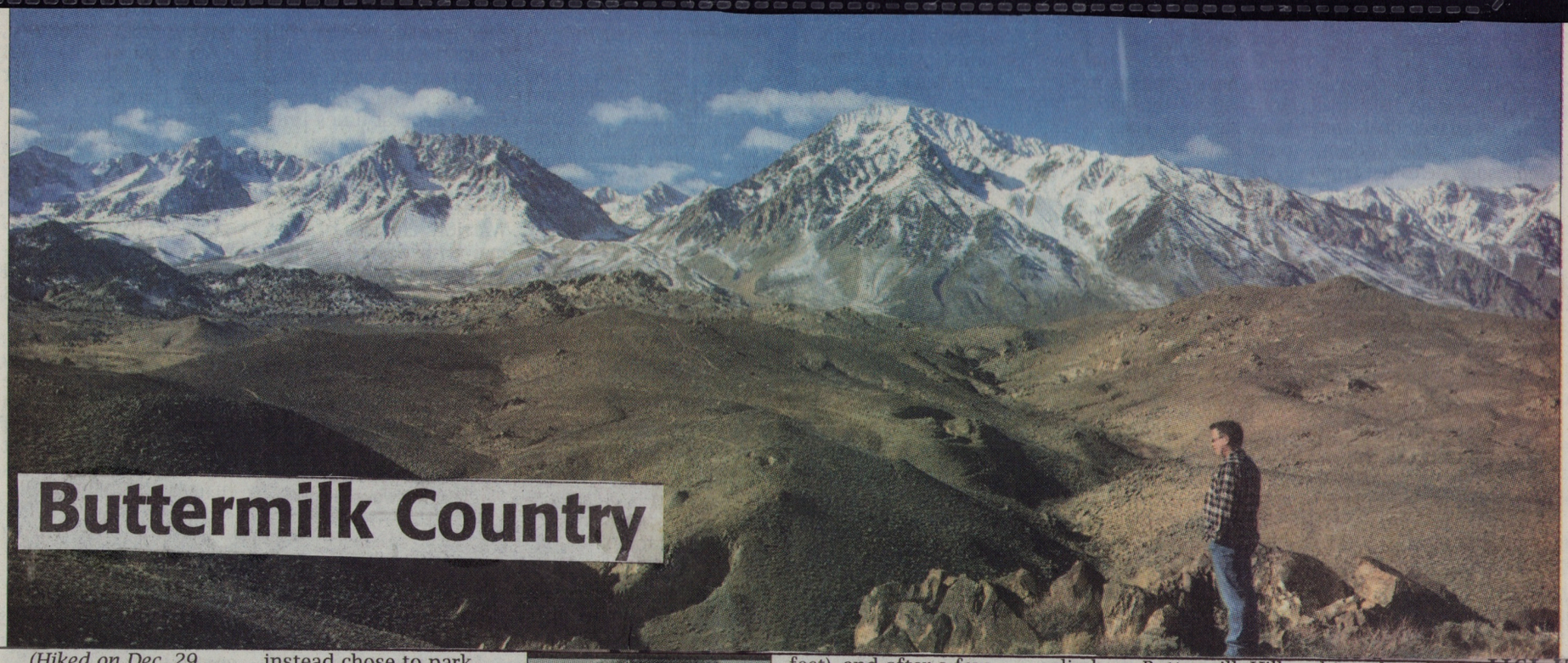
(Craig Jackson is a Bishop resident and avid hiker/backpacker who enjoys exploring his new backyard after having relocated here in 2013 from Southern California. Email him at Sierracj51@gmail.com.)

Buttermilk Hill has many old mining prospects scattered about.

Photo by Craig

Mount Humphreys and Basin Mountain from the side of Buttermilk Hill.

Photo by Craig Jackson



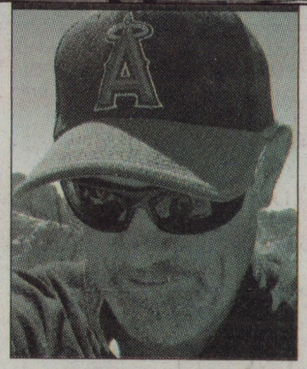
Buttermilk Country

(Hiked on Dec. 29, 2018)

When my brother Mark and I go for a hike, it doesn't matter where we go or what we do, we always have a great time. Our last hike was no exception, it was one day after my birthday and we had all day to explore, so we hit the road early and eager to go. Without any real discussion beforehand, we left the Comfort Inn in Bishop and headed west on Highway 168, anticipating some type of adventure near Buttermilk Country.

It was a little after 8 a.m. when I turned off Highway 168 onto Buttermilk Road, and immediately parked in the turnout on the right. We thought about driving 3.5 more miles up Buttermilk Road and wandering there, but instead chose to park where we were and climb some peaks to the north. It was a beautiful morning to say the least, a few clouds hovering near the tall peaks on the Sierra Crest, bright sunshine overhead and a cool breeze at our backs. We started out in a northerly cross country direction towards McGee Creek, less than a mile away. Even though McGee Creek is small and narrow in spots, the vegetation along its edges is extremely thick and difficult to navigate through, but there is a spot at the end of an old mining road at the bottom of the ravine with a gap in the brush, and a couple of leaps takes one across the creek.

Now on an old mining road, we followed it for about a mile until it turned south and headed downhill. This is where



CRAIG JACKSON
COLUMNIST

we left the comforts of the road and began hiking off trail towards another road we saw higher up. After some huffing and puffing, as well as a brief period of perspiration, the road was reached and a right turn made.

It didn't take much longer to reach the saddle on the west side of Buttermilk Hill (6035 feet), and after a few moments of rest, we started up its western slope. It's not a long climb to the top but it's a steep one. We passed a couple of extremely deep and dangerous mine shafts along the way (fenced off), and before we could blink twice we were at the summit. It's a great peak, covered in rocks and boulders yet still has plenty of spots to sit down and enjoy the view.

A good 45 minutes was spent on top of Buttermilk Hill, talking about life, planning some summer hikes for this year, then hiking back down the same way we came up. There's another smaller peak less than a mile north of Buttermilk Hill, also decorated with mining relics, and that's where we headed next. As in the climb up Buttermilk Hill, it didn't take long to reach the summit of unnamed Peak 5090, rounded with a large summit cairn at the highpoint and no register.

Mark and I hung out on the broad summit for well over an hour, enjoying each other's company as well as the postcard view before us. It was one of those ideal situations, not soon to be forgotten. The wind began to pick up speed after a while, prompting us to hit the trail again, hiking in a southwest direction towards a handful of rocky outcroppings.

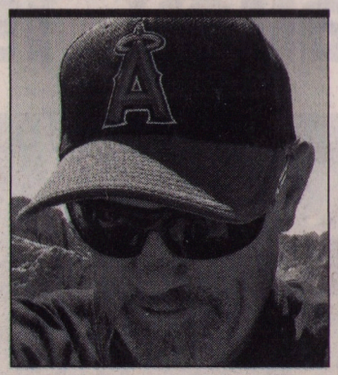
Our journey en route took us past boarded up mine shafts here and there, an old jalopy almost unrecognizable and other leftover remnants of a bygone era. History and hiking, two of my many favorite things here in the eastern Sierra. We had a great time climbing the outcrops, some easy to climb and others not so, but all in all a perfect end to a great day.

Six and a half hours after starting out in the morning, it was time to start hiking back to the car, a difficult decision on our part. Neither one of us wanted to be back in civilization, but the time had come to return. As always with Mark, we had a perfect time hiking in my 'neck of the woods' and look forward to doing it again in the near future.

(Craig Jackson is a Bishop resident and avid hiker/backpacker who enjoys exploring his new backyard after having relocated here in 2013 from Southern California. Email him at Sierracj51@gmail.com.)

Back to Buttermilk Country

(Hiked on Nov. 21, 2016)



CRAIG JACKSON
COLUMNIST

Most of the time I drive straight through Buttermilk Country on my way to the trailheads at South Lake, Lake Sabrina and North Lake for hikes in the high country above 10,000 feet.

Unfortunately at this time of year it is practically impossible hiking any of these trails, so what's left? Hiking in the spots that are too hot to hike in during the summer but are perfect for wandering in these cold outside temperatures. Buttermilk Country is one of these spots that has plenty of dirt roads to walk on and small peaks to climb, as well as mining ruins that are fun to explore safely. The high point is Grouse Mountain at 8,085 feet, but there are a number of smaller summits that can easily be climbed, affording possibly the best views of the Sierra Nevada west of Bishop.

Most folks that venture out into Buttermilk Country are there for the world-class rock climbing on the large quantity of perfect bouldering boulders. I never got into rock climbing, I guess it's because I like to keep my feet on the ground and moving constantly. I've hiked in Buttermilk Country many times now and have put some miles behind me, hiking all over the area from Buttermilk Hill to Grouse Mountain and the high point of the Tungsten Hills on the northwest side. For the latest hike, I parked off of Buttermilk Road and Highway 168 without a plan of attack, just a day of blissful wandering. There are so many roads throughout the area that it's easy to get around and check out the old mine sites, as well as peaks and rocks to climb, making for a great day with incredible views of the Sierra Crest to the west.

I parked in the turnout off Highway 168, which is about seven miles west of Bishop and started up an old road to the north that was barely noticeable anymore. The road dropped down to narrow McGee Creek, where it cannot be seen due to overgrown vegetation. I found the spot where there's a slight opening in the brush and three steps later I was back on the old road again. A few feet up creek there's what appears to be an old crane of some sort that's been left to rust for eternity. The trail stays next to the creek for a few more feet before turning left up a very dry canyon where there's an excavation site blocked by massive tall and scratchy water birch.

I turned right on a use trail that heads straight up to Buttermilk Hill (6,035 feet), this is where the fun begins. I chose a direct route up the steep slope to the ridge east of the actual summit. I could feel the cold wind hitting the sweat on my forehead as I made my way to the summit block, about one mile from my car. The views from here are spectacular, it's kind of like a painting that's alive, with mountains as far as the eye can see.

After signing the old register for the ump-teenth time, I started down the west side aiming for a smaller peak to the north. I hit the saddle running, gaining momentum for the push to the top of this unnamed peak. The summit has a large rock cairn on top of it with a very old rusted metal cigarette case containing paper so old it is impossible to read. I left it in the spot where I found it so the next person can be as curious as I was.

A quiet wind was blowing slightly from the west and that's the direction I headed, eyeballing a mine shaft next to a small grove of Cottonwood trees. Some slight exploring followed my arrival at the shaft, before moving southwest towards one of the many moderate size boulder knobs that dot the area. I spent a couple of hours going from knob to knob until I found myself on a southeasterly road that headed in the direction of my vehicle. I squished through some small patches of snow then jogged slowly towards McGee Creek, where I crossed it and hopped on the unrecognizable road that I started on. Before I knew it I was back at my car, fulfilled to the utmost maximum.

Clouds hide Basin Mountain and Mount Tom on the climb up Buttermilk Hill.

Photo by Craig Jac

(Craig Jackson is a Bish resident and avid hiker/ backpacker who enjoys exploring his new backya after having relocated her in 2013 from Southern California. Email him at Sierraci51@amail.com

Buttermilk Country

Situated just seven miles west of Bishop off State Route 168, Buttermilk Road allegedly got its name from Joe Inman's dairy, where in the 1870s teamsters from a nearby sawmill stopped for a glass of buttermilk on their way to and from the mill, prompting the unique place name. Another version states that goat milk turned to buttermilk by the time it reached Bishop during the summer months, according to Sharon Giacomazzi in her book, "Exploring Eastern Sierra Canyons, Bishop to Lone Pine."

A lovely picturesque surprise tucked into the base of the Sierra Nevada, the mesmerizing boulders of the Buttermilk Country are superb year-round but unsurpassed in late spring and early summer when the air is full of birdsong and the scent of flowers.

To the north are the Tungsten Hills, named for their main mining product. To the northeast, prominent on the Sierra skyline, is huge, almost triangular Mount Tom – near the Pine Creek Mine, once the largest tungsten producer in the United States.

Known more for its bouldering activities, Buttermilk Country is a fantastic spot to get out of your car and explore the mining history on foot. To reach Buttermilk Country from Bishop, head west on S.R. 168 for 7.3 miles and turn right on signed Buttermilk Road. For this hike, immediately park in the dirt turnout on the right by the historical marker.

First objective is the peak less than a mile away to the north, Buttermilk Hill. Start hiking down from the parking area on the dirt road to the right towards McGee Creek. Stay on the main road as it descends slightly to the creek, then cross the narrow creek to the other side. Heavy vegetation here but easy to cross the cold creek.

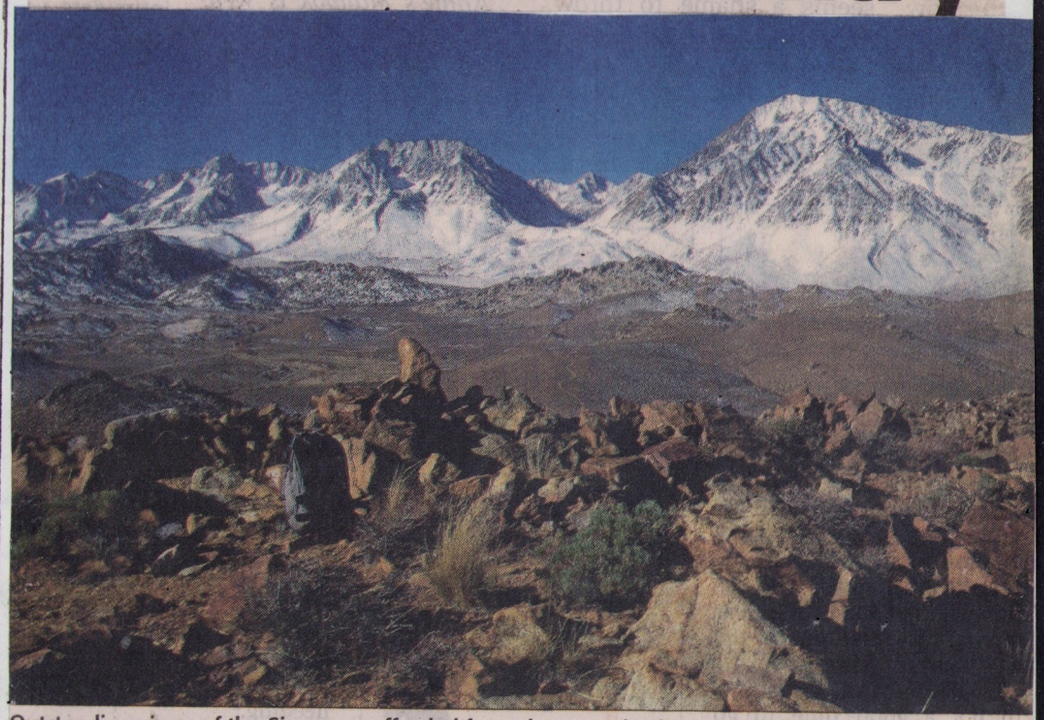
Once on the other side, start ascending as the road curves up and to the left. Leave the road near the trees and follow a use-trail north as it starts climbing steeply towards Buttermilk Hill. Hike through some huge boulders, pausing occasionally to take in the magnificent views of the Sierra to the west. Gain the base of Buttermilk Hill and start the short, steep hike to the summit. You can either go straight up the side or, like I did, switchback at an angle to alleviate the steepness of the grade.

Shortly arrive on the summit ridge and walk a short distance to the top. There is a large rock pile on the peak with an old glass jar containing the summit register. After signing the register, start scrambling down the west side and soon encounter a large excavation site with a very deep hole. Stay clear of the huge hole outside of the fenced-in area.

Continue down a short distance to the road below and turn right. Follow the dirt road down to a saddle and begin another short climb to the rounded summit to the north. Look for a mine shaft on the left and then begin a short, somewhat steep climb to the rounded summit. Lower than Buttermilk Hill, this unnamed peak has a large rock pile on top but no legible summit register. I did find an old, rusted tobacco tin with non-readable, old paper inside but no name or dates.

Return the way you came back down to the road and follow it back up to the west base of Buttermilk Hill. There are a few roads in this area, some blocked with BLM three-post gates and others that are open for off-roading. Take one of the closed roads south towards Buttermilk Road and look for the original dirt road on the left that leads back down to McGee Creek.

Once back on the original road, pass another excavation/mine shaft on the right and make your way back down to McGee Creek. Cross the creek and head back up to the road you came in on and eventually the parking area. Buttermilk Country is large with many dirt roads, so wandering can be done in a variety of ways but I do suggest getting to he summit of Buttermilk Hill for the outstanding views.



Outstanding views of the Sierra are afforded from the summit of 6,045-foot Buttermilk Hill

The White Mountains, Tungsten Hills and McGee Creek from Buttermilk Hill.

2015

Druid Stones Loop

Two thousand feet above Bishop, with 360 degrees of scenic paradise, is a climbing and hiking area known as the Druid Stones. Living only 10 minutes from the trailhead, I was surprised that I had not yet been here yet. So I decided to give it a shot a couple of months ago.

Home to hundreds of boulder climbing possibilities, it's an area definitely worth checking out, with lots of climbing and scrambling potential higher on the hillside and to the south in a seemingly endless sea of boulders and outcroppings. Large, elegant and stunning boulders are found everywhere along the trail during the four-plus-mile loop hike with, in my opinion, the best view of Bishop to be found anywhere. A little over a mile in from the trailhead, and a few hundred feet higher, is the dominant and centralized Druid Stone, just east of the trail.

The Druid Stones are similar to Buttermilk Country and its surrounding areas in the type of rock found. It is also made of quartz monzonite, making it rough on the fingertips while climbing. The loop hike, although steep and on a well-defined trail, is worth it as it offers excellent views of the landscape from north to south and east to west. This hike can be done all year round but the best times to do it are in winter and spring. Summer can be very hot, but in spring there is a good chance of seeing a vivid variety of Eastern Sierra wildflowers, including violet lupines, Indian paintbrush, Yellow nude buckwheat and more.

To reach the trailhead from Bishop, head west on West Line Street from U.S. Highway 395 for a couple of miles and then turn left at the light at Barlow Lane. Drive 1.6 miles to a fork in the road; go right on Bir Road. Proceed 1.8 miles to a dirt road on the left. If you drive a four-wheel drive vehicle, it is possible to reach the trailhead in one-half mile. I recommend parking in the turnout on Bir Road and hiking to the trailhead to get warmed up for what's to come.

Begin the hike by following the dirt road down for a short distance and turning right at the T intersection. Walk a few hundred feet to a small circular parking area and look for the trail that leads up the canyon. As of Jan. 8, there was no sign at the trailhead but the beginning of the trail is easy to find.

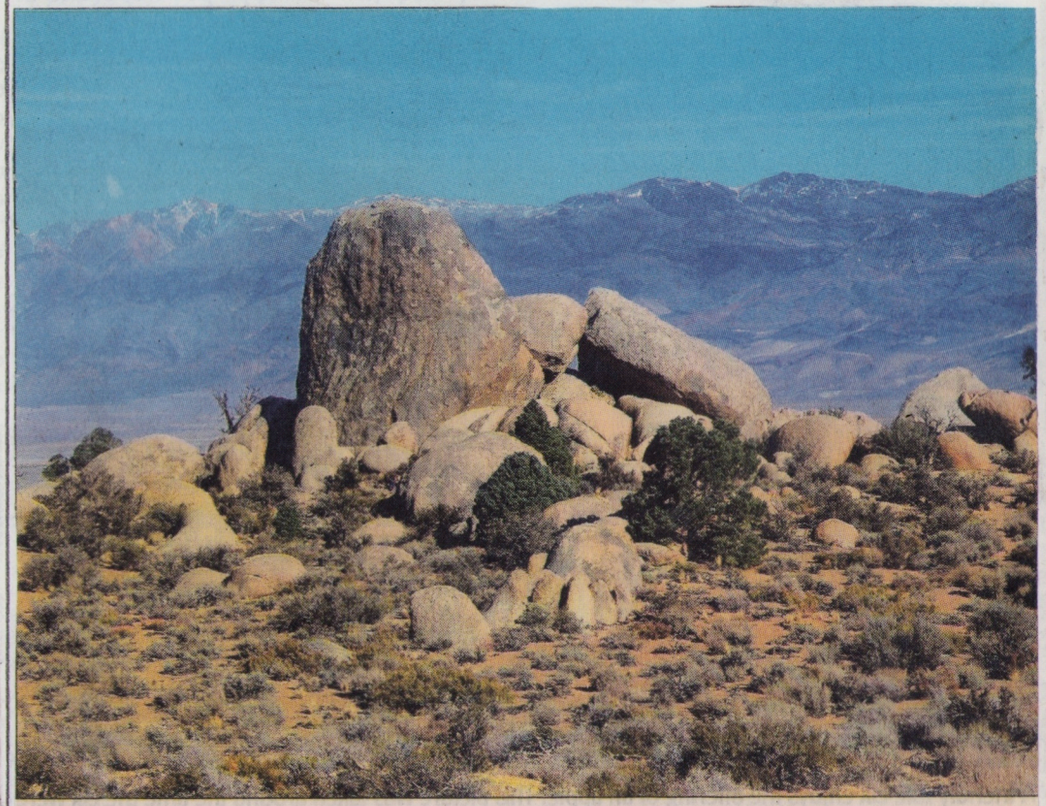
Immediately start steep hiking as the trail initially leads up the canyon. After almost one mile of climbing switchbacks, the trail slightly drops down to a small saddle. This is a great place to take a break, catch your breath and enjoy the great view of Bishop below.

At the saddle, and before the trail angles up the hill again, look for an easy-to-miss fork in the trail. The trail to the right will be your return on the loop; take the left fork and climb another steep hill. At 1.2 miles in, the trail levels out as a distinct boulder field sits to the left of the trail. Look for the largest boulder, known as the Druid Stone, looming large amongst the other boulders. Chances are good you will see some climbers milling about near this prominent spot. The area also offers great views of the White Mountains, the Sierra Nevada to the west and the city of Bishop below.

The main trail continues in some level terrain for a short distance before it starts a very steep ascent to the top of the ridge to the right. No switchbacks here to ease the climb, just straight up. Once at the top of the hill, the trail eases significantly as it drops down to a saddle dotted with Pinyon pines.

Look carefully for the turnoff for the loop portion of the hike at just over two miles from the trailhead. There is no sign at this junction; look for rocks and branches on the ground directing in a northerly direction down an open area. For hikers that are looking for a longer hike and increased adventure, bypass the turnoff and head straight on the main trail. This trail eventually leads up to Coyote Flat, but there is a nice meadow to relax in approximately 1.5 miles from the loop cutoff.

From the aforementioned junction and to complete the loop portion of the hike, start down the trail in the high valley for about a mile. The trail then begins descending steeply amongst trees and boulders for a little over a mile before joining up with the main trail and completing the loop. Enjoy the great views and cool breeze while hiking back to the trailhead.



The Druid Stone is just over a mile from the trailhead and offers great climbing.

At a glance:

- 4.4-mile round trip loop, 1,900-foot elevation gain
- Great boulders for climbers
- Outstanding view of Bishop
- Possible longer hike to Coyote Flat
- Snow possible at 7,000 feet; be prepared
- Be careful climbing boulders if not trained to do so
- Outstanding vistas, rewarding hike

MARCH 2015

Enjoying great view amongst the big boulders

Druid Stones Loop

He originally wanted to park near the entrance to Silver Canyon, close to Laws Museum, and climb the shale-covered slopes of Silver Canyon Point and Dan Point, but I convinced him to visit the Druid Stones Loop and check out the gigantic boulders and the best view of Bishop I've seen so far.

He was persuade by my description of the trail, which I had done only once before.

We chose an exceptional Thursday for our hike, as the sky was totally clear with a nice cool southerly breeze, which kind of cooled us off on this strenuous trail.

After polishing off a nice, hearty breakfast, we took the very short drive south on Barlow Lane to where it separates and becomes Bir Road to the right. A couple of miles later there's a dirt road on the left that initially drops down and then cul-de-sacs in a few hundred feet on the right.

The trailhead here is not marked but is obvious as it starts to climb steeply on the left side of an unknown canyon. This trail definitely means business as it immediately begins quite steeply and doesn't have any type of relatively flat sections until reaching the top of the first ridge, and a thousand feet higher, in the first mile.

Welcome rest and a few nice pine trees greeted us as the view of Bishop grew better and better.

The brief, easy walking ended quite suddenly as we passed the return portion of the loop and began to climb higher up, getting closer to the massive rocks and another brief flat spot. Serious rock climbers venture here to test their skills on the giant boulders.

My brother must have had some Wheaties before breakfast because he kept a fast pace in the morning warmth.

We moseyed quickly around this magnificent rock garden, taking pictures and cooling off a bit before the toughest part of the loop hike.

One more ridgetop left to conquer on this very discernible trail, with the presence of more trees becoming more apparent. Two miles into the hike now we reached welcome shade and a fantastic cool breeze while standing on the ridge.

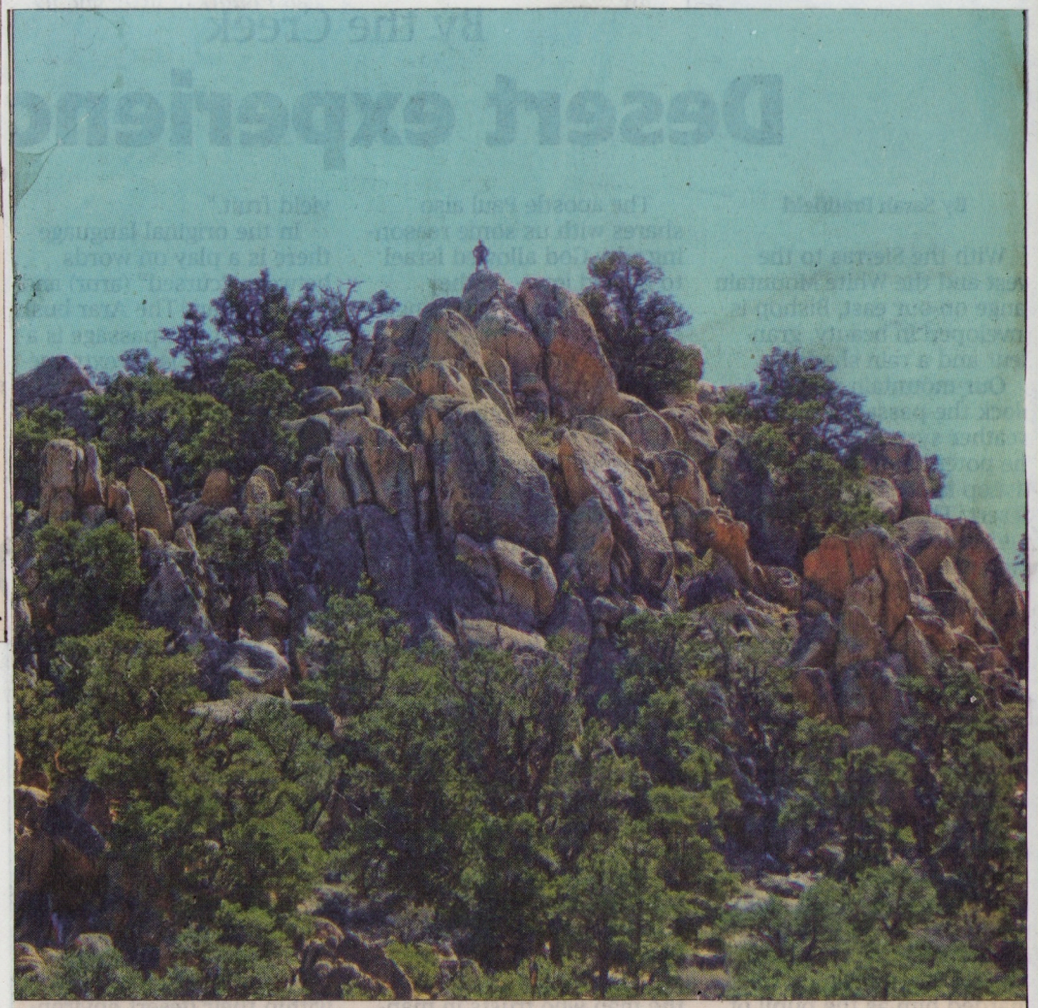
For the next half mile the path now pleasantly drops down a bit to a saddle and passes by the unmarked junction with the loop portion of the hike.

We chose to bypass the loop for now and continue up the trail, which eventually climbs up to Coyote Ridge, or so I've been told.

We both still had some gas in the tank so I suggested we hike another mile or so to a nice spot in a small valley, surrounded by three or four rocky outcrops.

Before we had some lunch, we climbed the high rock pile on the south side of the valley and were greeted with a nice 360-degree view of the Owens Valley, White Mountains and snow to the west.

A couple of hours was spent here, kicking back and relaxing under an umbrella-like pine tree and white, puffy clouds coming from the west. Refreshed and ready, we eagerly anticipated the enjoyable downhill hiking we were about to do. A half hour later we were back at the saddle and made the left turn to complete the loop portion of the hike. Two hours from the valley where we had lunch, we arrived back at the car, feeling the warmth of the spring sun beating on our skin.



Mark on top of one of the rocky outcrops near the trail.

Treasure Lake

View back down to South Lake on the trail to Treasure Lakes.

If you're looking for a moderate hike with an incredible payoff at the end, the family-friendly adventure to one or more of the Treasure Lakes is a perfect fit. This great trail supplies the eager hiker with brilliant views throughout the entire experience.

Even though South Lake may not be flourishing like it was in the past, there are a lot more reasons to drive up South Fork Bishop Creek Canyon. Presently, the canyon is beginning its transformation into a yellow and gold dream, while the trails are lined with fallen leaves. The cool, crisp air is starting to dominate the weather pattern at the higher elevations, bringing a sweatshirt is a wise thing to do.

The trailhead for the hike to the Treasure Lakes is at South Lake, 22 miles west of Bishop on South Lake Road. Parking is the same for the Bishop Pass trail in the lower parking lot. I drove up there early in the morning two days ago and witnessed the magnificent aspens near Parchers Resort before arriving at the newly paved parking area. The parking stripes had not been painted yet and the Road Closed signs were on the ground. May still have to park a little further down the road.

The hike begins next to the Bishop Pass trail sign at the end of the road near some bear boxes and restrooms. The trail initially descends briefly on approximately 20 steps before it emerges high above the shore of South Lake. Begin climbing right away on a very well-worn trail that continues uphill with an incredible view of the massive peaks ahead.

There are many aspens that line the route in the beginning as the trail climbs with earnest then enters a welcome forest. The tantalizing vistas continue as the path turns left up a short ravine before topping out in a small, wonderful meadow, great place for a breather.

Enter the John Muir Wilderness under the shade of mighty pine trees in just under a mile, then reach a trail junction. To the left is the Bishop Pass trail to Long Lake, Saddlebag Lake, Bishop Lake and Bishop Pass. This trek goes right towards the Treasure Lakes.

The trail now begins a relaxing descent as it undulates slowly down to the South Fork Bishop Creek. Small meadows line the path as feeder creeks cascade down from the left heading to South Lake. The trail crosses over Bishop Creek's South Fork on a sturdy log then begins the climb up to the Treasure Lakes.

Regaining elevation previously lost, the uphill fun begins nicely through the forest as it transfers onto granite slabs. In previous years, this part of the trail was somewhat difficult to follow but has become more discernible lately. The roar of the first Treasure Lake's outlet creek gets louder and louder before reaching a very well-built log bridge.

Two and a half miles into the hike now, cross the bridge and follow the dirt path as it continues straight ahead. Follow the bootprints in the sand up the trail through a rocky section then attack some mildly steep switchbacks, before leveling out next to the creek. A few steps later see the pristine waters of the first of the Treasure Lakes. This is the lowest of the lakes but might just be the prettiest. Peak 12,047 dominates the spectacular backdrop with trees lining the shore of this sweet lake. Choose one of the many wonderful spots to take in the views in this alpine wilderness.

Enjoy a nice lunch here and decide if more is better. To see the other four Treasure Lakes, easily follow the trail and within moments see smaller second Treasure Lake on the left. Hurd Peak stands guard above the second lake, piercing the sky at 12,237 feet.

The now less-traveled trail begins its 500-foot ascent in a boulder strewn ravine next to the higher three lakes outlet stream. The creek disappears under the gigantic boulders, covering the ground as far as the eye can see.

The arduous and stressful climb goes on from boulder to rock and back for a half mile before arriving at the third Treasure Lake. The barren scene explodes with the sight of this lake. Mount Johnson, 12,871 feet, looks dreamlike and very approachable from here, even with the countless number of rocks and boulders leading to its summit. The two higher lakes are just ahead and are equally spectacular. Go climb a peak from here or head back down trail, either makes for a great ending to a perfect day.

Make plans to stop at the Bishop Creek Lodge after your fall drive up magnificent South Fork Bishop Creek Canyon for a tasty beverage or a great meal. They are open for lunch and dinner Thursday thru Sunday until Oct. 26. Say hi to the wonderful new owners, Canon and Karrie Maurice, and please make sure you tell them Craig sent you. Get up there and see the fall color explosion.

At a glance:

· 6 mile round trip hike to the first two Treasure Lakes

· Good fishing at the lower of the lakes

· Dramatic peaks surround the lakes

· Cooler temps, awesome fall colors

· Great exercise and a memorable experience

50 YEARS IN HIGH SIERRA

Mountain Man Guides Others Back to Nature

BY CHARLES HILLINGER
Times Staff Writer

NORTH LAKE, Calif.—For the last half-century, the third-generation mountain man has guided thousands along the slopes, ridges and summits of the High Sierra.

Seventy-year-old Art Schober—granddaddy of all High Sierra packers—operates a pack station at this 9,400-foot alpine lake 17 miles west of Bishop.

Schober is a throwback to the 19th century mountain men who roamed the towering wilderness of California's majestic backbone.

Since 1925, the spindly packer has led visitors from throughout the globe to the pristine world of high meadows, steep slopes, spectacular cliffs and peaks and hundreds of remote lakes, using saddle horses, mules and burros.

He even has a mountain lake named after him—Lake Schober. And he blazed many of the trails in the high country enjoyed each summer by hundreds of backpackers.

Art and his brother, John, when they were guides together in the 1920s and 1930s, gave colorful names to 25 of the High Sierra lakes in the Lake Sabrina Basin and Lamarck Lake area.

"In the old days there were no trails in this part of the country," Schober explained. "We built miles and miles of original trails with pick and shovel, dynamiting and blasting wherever necessary."

The area had never been surveyed when the Schobers first explored the back country. The lakes they named appeared on no maps at the time.

Lakes named by Schober and his brother are well-know today to most veteran Sierra hikers and fishermen. The deep blue lakes are nestled in the mountains at elevations between 10,000 and 13,000 feet on the eastern slopes of the High Sierra.

"We named them as we encountered them," Schober said. "Like Midnight Lake. We named it after my horse Midnight.

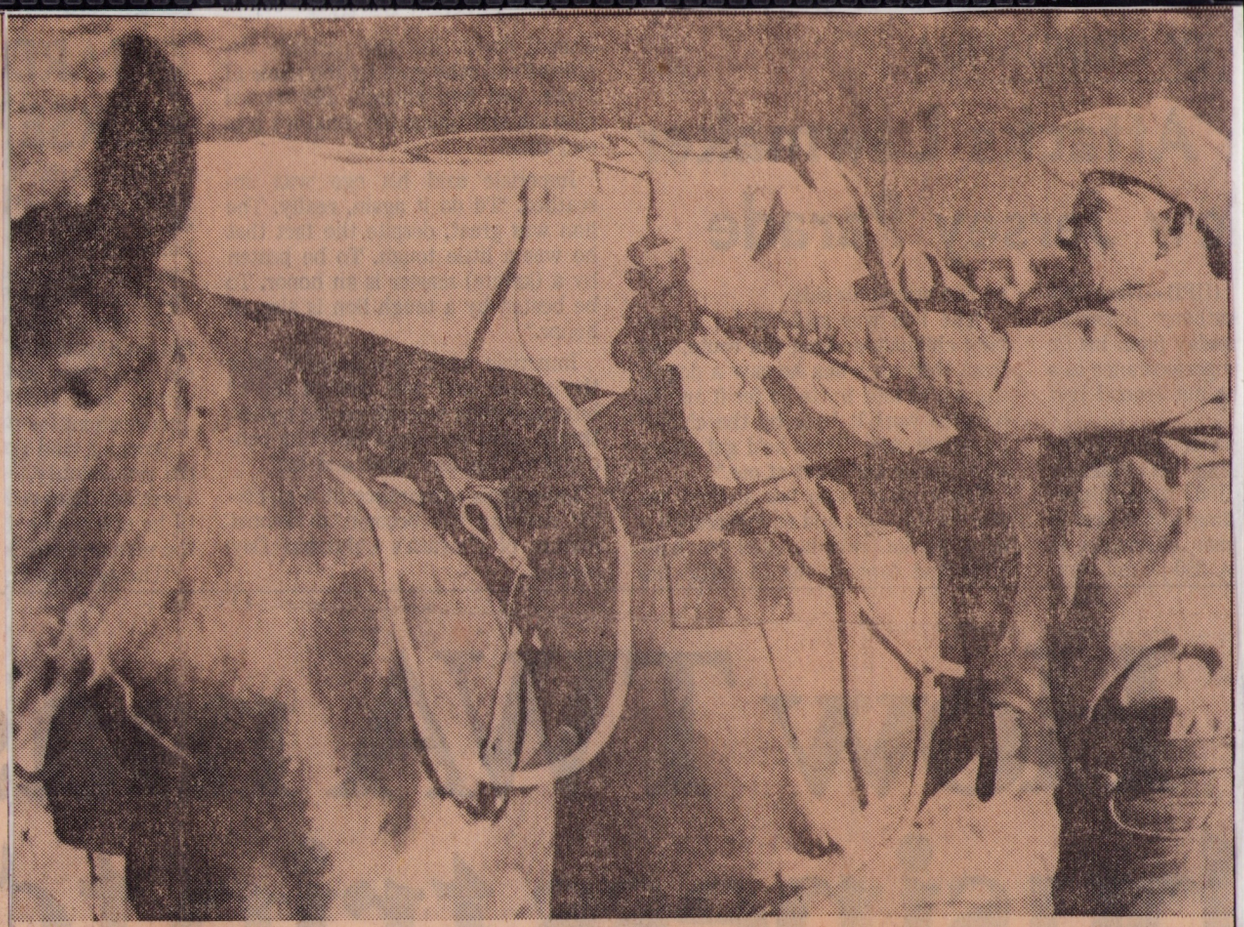
"We called another lake Hungry Packer Lake because when we found it we had run out of food and were hungry."

Art gave Drunken Sailor Lake its name because "it's a funny little lake that goes around all kinds of little circles."

The three Baboon Lakes were named on a trip when Art, his brother and some friends were stocking fish in the high country in 1930.

"It was a hot day and we started shedding our clothes. One of us mentioned how we looked like a bunch of baboons. So we called the lakes the Baboons," recalled Art.

Art and his brother named one Topsy Turvey because of a "lot of jumbled rocks in the water." Helldiver Lake was named because a helldiver was spotted there.



N—Art Schober, 70, preparing his pack train for a trip into the High Sierra from his pack station

"Dingleberry is probably the funniest name we used," said Schober. Lake Dingleberry at 12,000 feet is popular with many fishermen. Schober named it after the hardened droppings on sheeps wool.

One of Schober's favorite lakes named by him and his brother is Blue Heaven.

"We stocked the lakes each year, bringing up cans of rainbow and brookie fingerlings with the melting of the snow in early June," Schober said. "No one else was planting the lakes in this country then. And these high mountain lakes had no natural fish."

Ironically, in recent years backpackers have pleaded with the U.S. Forest Service and National Park Service to ban all stock from high mountain trails.

"That's the hell of it," Schober said. "Many of the backpackers want us phased out. They want us prohibited from running stock on the very trails we pioneered, built and maintained at no cost to anyone but ourselves for years."

Schober has carried many a heart attack victim out of the high mountains. He has been on scores of search and rescue operations.

His father and grandfather were both well-known mountain men born in the Bishop area. Schober's father ran a 20-mule team between Bishop and Los Angeles for years.

"He freighted honey to Los Angeles and brought household goods, food and other items back to Bishop," the packer said. "It took dad six weeks to make the round trip. He carried all his own water and feed for the stock."

Another hike, another pass

Piute Pass starts from the hiker parking area at North Lake, just up the road from Aspendell. We met up at Buttermilk Road and SR168 and drove the 20 or so miles up Bishop Creek Canyon to the west side of North Lake. There were only three other vehicles in the parking area; a good sign indeed.

Our hike started out with a nice half mile walk up the dirt road to the North Lake Campground and the Piute Pass trailhead. Since the campground was still closed, there was absolutely no one else around. It was very quiet and still at the official beginning of our hike to Piute Pass.

It's five miles of enjoyable hiking with a mild elevation gain to the pass on the Sierra Crest, with one of those "to-die-for" views. As usual of late, Sarah and I started off early and happy, marching through a fragrant pine forest for the first mile. Further up the trail we encountered a series of switchbacks that led to our first snow on the trail.

While approaching some shorter switchbacks on a boulder strewn ascent, we ran into the only "problem" of the day: a 30-yard stretch of slanted snow and ice. I went across first, following some somewhat icy boot prints to the other side. On the other hand, Sarah seemed to glide gracefully like it was no problem, making it look easy.

About an hour into our hike, we met up with the creek that cascades into a small pool next to a massive snowbank. It was quite an incredible sight to see. A couple dozen pictures were taken, as well as a hard boiled egg consumed by Sarah, then we were on our way. Shortly thereafter, we were hiking along the north shore of Loch Leven, with snow-covered Piute Pass visible in the distance. The real fun was about to begin.

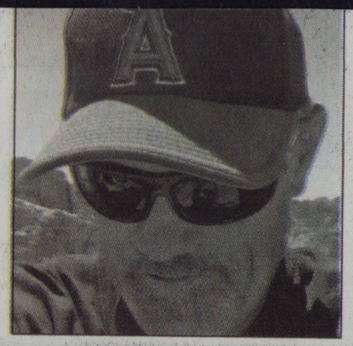
I love hiking the last 3 miles to the pass, flat spots here and there next to meadows and waterfalls, as well as stair step climbs leading closer and closer. To this point, the snow had been sporadic, sections here and there but nothing too much. That was about to change. Below Piute Lake, we encountered complete snow on the trail, but our familiarity with this hike made it rather simple to follow the path to the pass.

Less than three hours from starting out, Sarah and I were standing at 11,423-foot Piute Pass. The view was beyond spectacular. Originally, we had planned on taking a side trail to Muriel Lake, but the snow made it easy for us to alter that plan. Instead, we hiked down toward Summit Lake and found the perfect spot to hang out, which we did for over two hours, before reluctantly heading back.

Snow-covered Paiute Pass shimmers under the late May sun.

Photo by Craig Jackson

Piute Pass



CRAIG JACKSON
9-9-2017 COLUMNIST

There's nothing like embarking on a hike at the crack of dawn after a night of heavy rain, lightning and thunder. The sight and sound of the water dripping from the tall trees onto the muddy ground as a cool breeze blows down canyon, can't be beat. This was exactly the scenario last Friday as I began hiking from the North Lake Campground to Piute Pass (11,423 feet) and Muriel Lake. Exactly four weeks earlier, the night before my hike to Duck Pass and Duck Lake, the same weather event occurred; pouring rain with lightning and thunder in the Owens Valley. But when I woke up the next morning last week, the sky was perfectly clear with a countless number of stars from every direction.

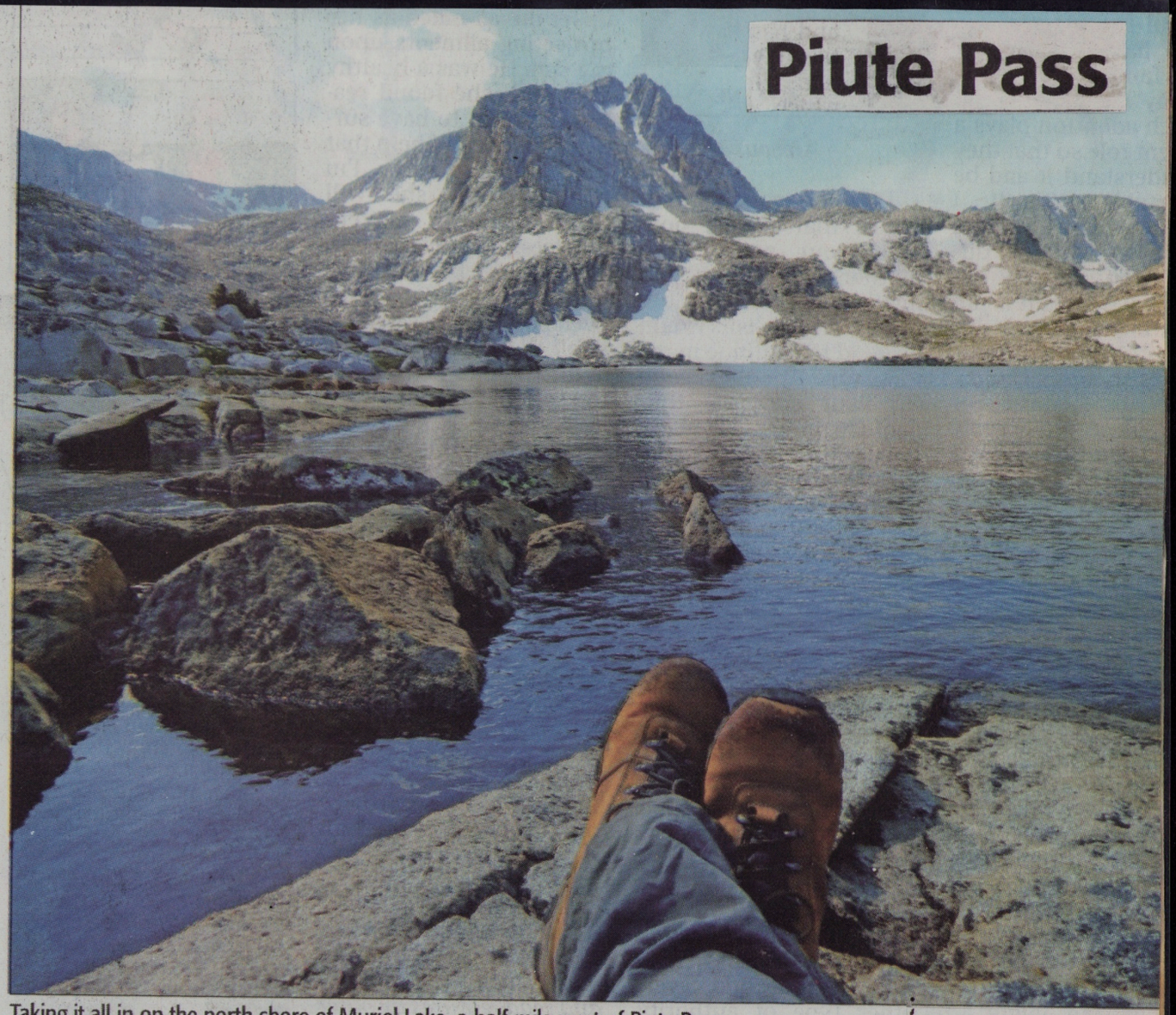
Since my son and I passed on the hike to Piute Pass the Friday before, I figured why not give it a shot since it's one of my favorite hikes in the Eastern Sierra and the view from the pass is more than worth the effort to get there. From the trailhead at the west end of the North Lake Campground, the Piute Pass Trail travels 5.5 glorious miles, with a 2,100-foot gain, past singing waterfalls and bright-colored meadows before reaching Piute Pass. The trail continues on and eventually meets up with the John Muir and Pacific Crest Trails, therefore it is very popular with backpackers and overnight visitors.

My plan for the day was to get a very early start, hike up to the pass then continue on a side trail for half a mile to Muriel Lake, and possibly Lost Lakes. There were some clouds left over from the night before, concerning me slightly, but I was prepared for the worst. There's no hiker parking at the trailhead, unless occupying a campsite at the campground, so all hikers must park in the lot next to Bishop Pack Outfitters, a half mile down the road. I pulled into the first spot a little after 6 a.m. and within a few minutes I was on the road heading to the trailhead. There were a few campers at the campground standing around shivering, but I was the only person on the trail at this time of day. The first mile was basically an uphill hike through a pleasant forest, until the 1.3-mile mark where I crossed over North Fork Bishop Creek on a very wet log, then re-crossed it again a couple of minutes later.

I looked to my right just as the sun was illuminating the orange-red rocks of the Piute Crags, and also began the first of many steep switchbacks and large granite steps. With the creek to my left, I made it 3.1 miles to the first of the beautifully blue Loch Leven Lakes, and the first sight of Piute Pass, 2.5 miles to the west. I took a very short break under a shady tree while two huge marmots were sunning themselves on one of the big boulders above.

After 4.2 miles of enjoyable hiking, and passing a colorful meadow with two glistening cascades, I arrived at semi-large Piute Lake. This is a great turn around spot, or perhaps a nice picnic, but I wasn't interested in either of those as I had my eyes on Piute Pass, a little over a mile ahead. This next stretch of the Piute Pass trail is by far my favorite part of the entire hike, the route is exposed above tree line, with ever-expanding views back down canyon at the lakes I had already hiked next to.

It was 8:45 a.m. when I slowly walked the last few steps and summited 11,423 foot Piute Pass. It was quite chilly with a nice wind blowing in my face while I took in the view of Humphreys Basin and the myriad of jagged peaks in the distance. Instead of turning back here I took a side trail for a half mile to vividly blue Muriel Lake, directly below 12,937 feet Muriel Peak. This was my final destination for the day, laying on a flat rock and admiring the beauty of the Sierra Nevada, in between naps.



Taking it all in on the north shore of Muriel Lake, a half-mile west of Piute Pass.

Photo by Craig Ja

(Craig Jackson is a Bis resident and avid hiker/ backpacker who enjoys exploring his new backya after having relocated he in 2013 from Southern California. Email him at Sierraci51@gmail.com.)

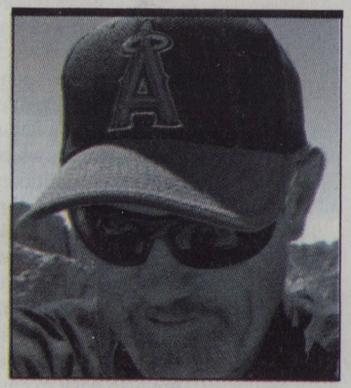
(Hiked on Sept. 29, 2017)

On the same day that my father turned 89 years young, I celebrated for him by taking a hike from South Lake to the Chocolate Lakes Loop and a climb of Chocolate Peak. I consider myself to be very lucky living in the same town as both my mother (birthday Oct. 9) and father and being able to spend so much time together; I love you both very much. Unfortunately, at age 89, my father isn't able to get out on any of our Eastern Sierra trails anymore, but I will always have great memories of vacations with both parents in the Sierra Nevada.

We were going to celebrate with a nice dinner at Sage in Bishop that evening, and coincidentally it was my day off also, so what best to do than to get in a nice hike prior to the festivities. I was looking for a moderate adventure with about 10 miles of hiking and incredible views, making the Chocolate Lakes Loop out of South Lake the perfect choice. With a climb of 11,682-foot Chocolate Peak included, the overall trek would be a little over 9 miles with a unsurpassed view from the summit.

It had been a couple of months since I started a hike from the Bishop Pass trailhead at South Lake, enjoying a full day in the south fork drainage and topping out at Bishop Pass, with its exceptional scenery. The latest adventure would take me up the Bishop Pass Trail again for 2.5 miles to the Chocolate Lakes turnoff, passing the three Chocolate Lakes, up to Chocolate Peak, down to Ruwau Lake then back to the trailhead. Altogether a perfect half-day hike!

The drive up Highway 168 from Bishop to the South Lake Road turnoff takes only 20 minutes from home, and that's where the fall color show really begins. The sun was still behind the ridge to the east so I didn't get the full effect of the bright



CRAIG JACKSON
COLUMNIST

fall colors, but that was okay since I would be driving back down later on in the afternoon. I pulled into the parking lot at the end of the road at 7:55 a.m. and within 5 minutes was on the trail, simultaneously seeing the sun glimmer off the west side of South Lake.

I'll say that the majority of hikers and backpackers that plow their way up and over Bishop Pass are clueless to the fact that there are four pristine lakes less than a half mile to the east. The three Chocolate Lakes, as well as Bull Lake and Ruwau Lake, make for a great loop hike with moderate mileage and elevation gain. At 1 mile from the trailhead, the junction to Treasure Lakes is passed, with the Marie Louise Lakes turnoff another half mile. Wonderful forest hiking ensued for another mile before turning left at the signed Chocolate Lakes confluence. There was a certain sense of solitary jubilance as I left the popular Bishop Pass Trail and shortly arrived at silent Bull Lake, staring agape at 13,525-foot Cloudripper dominating the Inconsolable Range to the southeast.

Sometimes a little difficult to follow, the trail skirts the left side of Bull Lake before steeply climbing a wet, rocky path up to 11,000-foot Lower Chocolate Lake. Smallest of the three lakes, it didn't take long to get to the other end and cross the connector stream between the first two lakes. Some more steep climbing led to the middle lake, where I stopped to take some pictures of Chocolate Peak's east side reflecting in the still water.

It's a short uphill segment to the largest of the lakes in the chain, where there's a nice grassy spot to rest and prepare for the next section. After passing the lake on the right, the trail then becomes narrower and begins a grueling 300-foot climb to the saddle directly above. This is where I left the primitive trail and headed upward in a cross country manner to Chocolate Peak's rocky summit. It was frigid at the top with a nasty wind seemingly coming from all directions, but the 360-degree view was worth the struggle. A quick signature into the summit register, along with a few more pictures, and I was rapidly scampering back down in the same direction towards Ruwau Lake, a half mile below. I found a great spot on a rock in the direct sunlight and had a bite to eat while thinking about my folks and wishing both of them the happiest of birthdays.

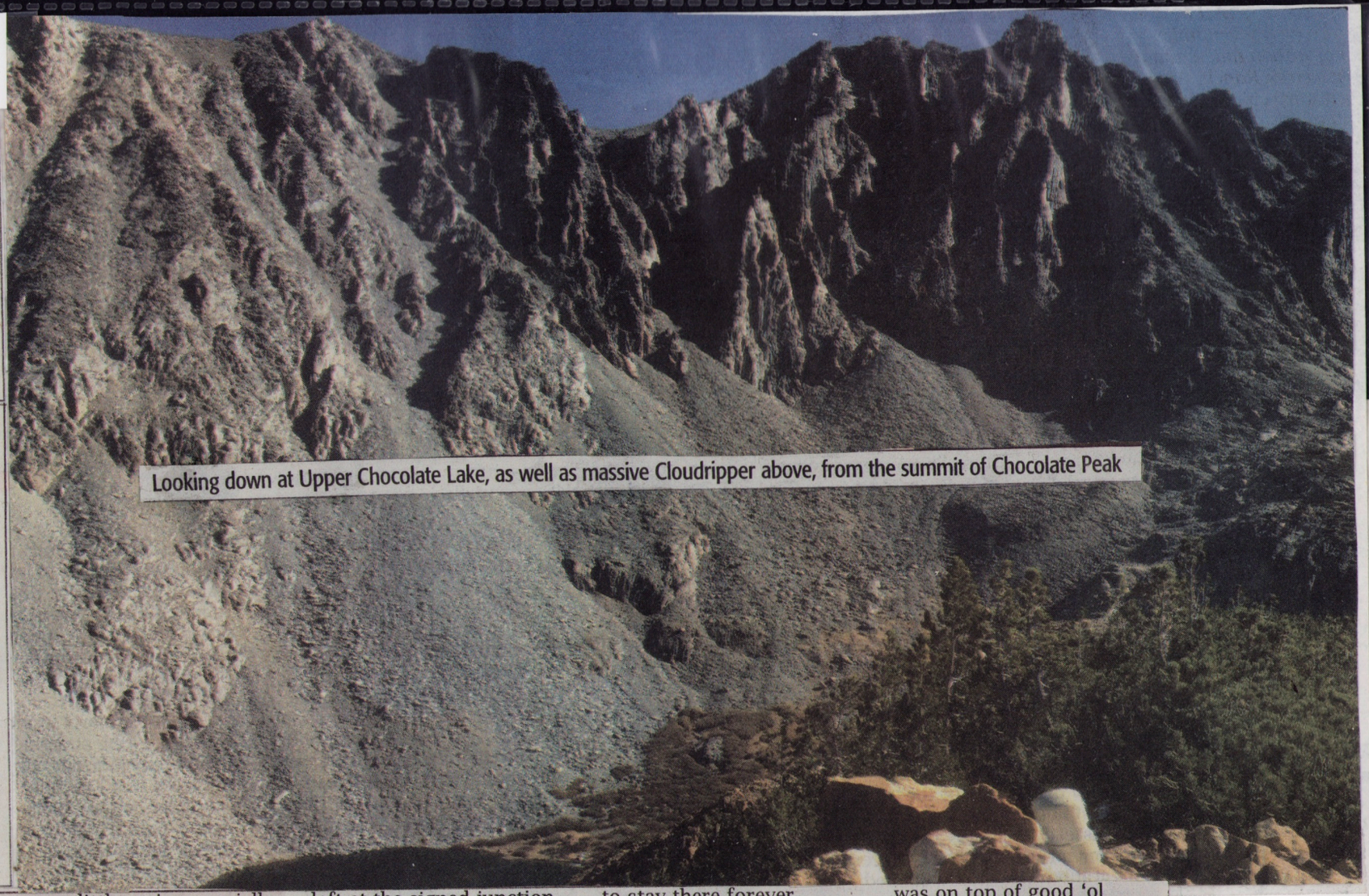
(Craig Jackson is a Bishop resident and avid hiker/backpacker who enjoys exploring his new backyard after having relocated here in 2013 from Southern California. Email him at Sierracj51@gmail.com.)

The three Chocolate Lakes below the Inconsolable Range, from the summit of Chocolate Peak.

Photo by Cra

The first Sierra summit my son and I climbed together was Chocolate Peak, in the Bishop Creek drainage above appropriately named Long Lake on one side and the three Chocolate Lakes on the other. It's a moderate hike out of South Lake with a spectacular view of the Inconsolable Range to the east, Bishop Pass to the south and impressive 13,08-foot Mt. Goode rising sharply to the west. Another one of those amazing classic Sierra Nevada vistas.

Ever since that first time my son Kevin and I hiked to the top of 11,682-foot Chocolate Peak (summer 2008), I've almost been back to the top every year since then. It's one of those memories that has stayed in my mind, and subconsciously I feel like I must re-enact it annually. It's not a difficult hike, less than 10 miles round trip, while seeing more than 10 different lakes and over a dozen named peaks.



Looking down at Upper Chocolate Lake, as well as massive Cloudripper above, from the summit of Chocolate Peak

Sharing the same trailhead as the hike to Bishop Pass and beyond, the trek to Chocolate Peak and the Chocolate Lakes sees less visitors after leaving the popular Bishop Pass Trail. It's kind of like another world, hiking on a quiet path next to pristine lakes and jagged peaks everywhere you look. Pure Heaven on Earth!

The trailhead at South Lake on this day was void of any human activity whatsoever, a sight I can't remember ever seeing at this beloved trailhead. It felt great being there, but it was a little eerie, especially with the wind blowing extremely cold down canyon and onto my face. With not one cloud in the sky, I started up the trail, trying to keep warm in the beginning as I ascended up the east side of South Lake.

Less than a mile from the trailhead I felt the first rays of sunshine hit my cold nose, and let me tell you, it felt great! From here on out I would be hiking in beautiful sunshine, and having a way better time with each and every step. A little over 2 miles up the trail I turned left at the signed junction for Chocolate Lakes, less than a half mile below Long Lake.

Still not having seen another hearty soul to this point, I followed the trail around majestic Bull Lake then up to Lower Chocolate Lake, where I took a short break below 13,525-foot Cloudripper, the highest peak in the Inconsolable Range. It was the perfect situation, being alone in the wilderness and hearing only the birds singing and the wind blowing slightly through the trees. I wanted to stay there forever.

Instead of loitering here all day I continued the loop portion of the hike, passing Middle and Upper Chocolate Lakes in the next half hour before attacking the steepest part of the hike up to Chocolate Peak's south ridge. Now overlooking Ruwau Lake below, I left the primitive trail and started straight up to Chocolate Peak.

There's no trail to the summit but the route is pretty straightforward; keep going until you reach the top. Before I knew it, there I was on top of good 'ol Chocolate Peak and enjoying the greatest 360-degree view of all time (at the moment it was). I had a nice lunch at the top for well over an hour then headed back down the trail, completing the loop all by myself.

(Craig Jackson is a Bishop resident and avid hiker/backpacker who enjoys exploring his new backyard after having relocated here in 2013 from Southern California. Email him at Sierracj51@gmail.com.)

Used by hikers and skiers alike, the roads up to Lake Sabrina and North Lake become ski tracks and snow-hiking trails for 5 months straight. It's a proverbial winter wonderland in Bishop Creek Canyon, and for those who love exploring in the snow, it is absolutely perfect.

Over the last few years now there have been many winter days spent in this part of the Sierra Nevada, exploring the snowy maze of roads that carry cars in the summer. It may not sound like an epic adventure in the High Country, but once you're out there stomping in the snow, it satisfies the need.

Not knowing what to expect as far as snow depth goes, I drove up Highway 168 west from Bishop a couple of weeks ago and parked at the winter closure gate in Aspendell. This is the spot where snowplows stop plowing and the cars stop driving; only walking and skiing to the end of the road and beyond. Just like the last few hikes (and more to come), it was well below freezing at the beginning, with another stiff wind blowing down canyon.

There was no one else in sight when I started up the road, covered in 3 to 6 inches of somewhat compacted snow. I was wearing my waterproof snow boots and gaiters, while carrying a trusty pair of micro spikes in my backpack, prepared to have some fun. The sun was still behind the mountains when I arrived at the turnoff to North Lake, about a mile up from my car and the locked gate.

A pair of coyotes roaming around near a snow-covered North Lake.

Originally, the plan was to hike up to Lake Sabrina, check out the conditions on the Sabrina Basin Trail and hang out near the dam. That all changed in an instant when I decided to follow some nice ski tracks up to North Lake instead, maybe even go all the way to the Piute Pass trailhead at the end of the road. Well, that was wishful thinking.

At first, the snow hiking was quite enjoyable, but the farther I went up the road, the deeper, and less packed, it became. Soon enough, my boots started sinking deeper and deeper with each and every step. While taking a break to adjust my gaiters, I looked up and saw two coyotes further up the road, seemingly trying to avoid me as much as possible.

Instead of following ski tracks to this point, I was now following two sets of fresh coyote tracks, until reaching the day-use parking area on the left, where the coyote tracks disappeared up a steep slope. The snow was now over a foot deep on the road and I was sinking that far with each step, until it reached my knee cap alongside snow-covered North Lake.

Without skis or snowshoes, this type of hiking can be a little tiresome and incredibly frustrating, so I found a rock and planted myself on it. It was beautifully quiet at North Lake, freshly covered in snow and awaiting the arrival of a lot more. After a nice break and a bite to eat, I followed my own boot tracks back to the start, considering myself to be a very lucky man.

Hazy view from The Hunchback

The hike to Green Lake, from the trailhead at South Lake, utilizes an old water pipe that was built in the early 1900s to fill South Lake after the dam was built. The moderate Green Lake Trail is one of the least crowded hikes in the area and offers some great mountain vistas and peak-bagging opportunities.

With relatively mid-range hikes to Vagabond Peak, Cloudripper, Sky Haven and The Hunchback, the three-mile hike to Green Lake is a great warm-up for the fantastic climbing to follow. The views of the Palisades, Baker Canyon, the lakes along the Bishop Pass Trail and the massive peaks all around, make this a great area to check off a couple of nice Sierra summits.

To reach the trailhead from Bishop, head west on State Route 168 for 15 miles to the left turn for South Lake. Drive 7.2 miles to the parking area at South Lake and try to find a spot in the day-hiking parking area near the bear boxes and restrooms. The upper parking area is for backpackers, who leave their vehicles there for more than a day.

Hike up to the upper parking area and go around the dark, either black or dark green, I don't remember, gate at the top. Walk about 100 yards, pass a small wood building on the right, then turn right towards the large round copper pipe that heads uphill. The first mile of this hike is on this old water pipe – not recommended for small children. The pipe is easily negotiable if looking down and maintaining balance.

The portion of the hike on the pipe is through a wonderful, shaded forest with moderate grade that leads to the official trail to Green Lake. Another trailhead is down at Parchers Resort, a few hundred feet lower than South Lake.

Leave the water pipe here and make a sharp right on the main trail that starts steeply uphill. After a few shaded switchbacks, arrive at the top of the ridge near a ravine loaded with dead, old trees, evidence of some sort of landslide or avalanche. Nice hiking leads to a couple of switchbacks above the left side of the canyon. An option here: leave the trail to the left and soon arrive at the shore of Bluff Lake, allegedly the headwaters of the South Fork Bishop Creek. I read that somewhere but I can't remember where.

Back on the trail to Green Lake, shortly arrive at little Brown Lake on the right. Shrinking annually, Brown Lake is a nice spot for a water break. Nice hiking follows through a meadow, then a couple more switchbacks and reach Green Lake's boulder-filled outlet stream. You can hear the water beneath the boulders but you can't see it.

Cross the outlet and hike on some wonderful level terrain on a sandy trail. The path quickly drops to the left and there it is, Green Lake. Suddenly at the shore, the cool breeze hits you immediately, bringing a fantastic feeling to your face.

Three miles from the trailhead, Green Lake is a great spot for fishing, reading or just basically kicking back. If energized and eager for more hiking and great views, continue on the trail as it heads steeply up the east wall to Grunion Plateau. A little less than a mile from Green Lake, and a few hundred feet higher, arrive at the moonscape atmosphere above. The dark peak due east and about a half mile away is The Hunchback.

There are a few ways to reach the summit but my preferred direction is hike to the obvious ridge to the right of the peak. Gain the ridge, turn left and hike on some rocks to the summit ridge. Turn right to the highpoint and look for the summit register under a rock. Signatures in the jar go as far back as the 1970s – very cool stuff. On a clear day, the views of Mount Sill, North Palisade, Vagabond Peak and Cloudripper are superior. There's actually a flat rock at the summit, perfect for relaxing. My recent hike was a bit hazy but was still awesome. Return the same way back to the trailhead and enjoy our great outdoors.

At a glance:

- Partial hike on water pipe, be prepared
- Good fishing at Green Lake
- Six miles round trip to Green Lake, 8 miles round trip to The Hunchback
- No mosquitoes last week, but still carry repellent
- Could be quite cool at The Hunchback; sweatshirt recommended

Green Lake is three miles from the trailhead and is a great spot for fishing and relaxing.

Hazy view of the Palisades from The Hunchback.

Chocolate Mountain

Kevin standing on the south ridge of Chocolate Peak.

Photo by Craig Jackso

Normally, I'm not one to complain much about the hot temperatures, dry conditions, drought or high winds, but I must say that I am sick and tired of the smoke. The vistas along the trail are one of the best parts about hiking. To hike up to a high lake or on top of a Sierra peak is mostly for the views alone, but those scenes are nonexistent with all this smoke in the air. Patience and time and it will all be gone, but for now, it won't stop me from getting outdoors.

My son surprised me and came up for the Labor Day weekend, eager to get out of Orange County and into the mountains. We spent Saturday in Mammoth doing a couple of short hikes and just enjoying being in Mammoth together. There were quite a few people in town for the holiday weekend, milling about at The Village and Main Lodge.

Not much for big crowds, I drove us up to Horseshoe Lake for a couple of short hikes and a cool walk near the Earthquake Fault. The next day, we chose to climb a small peak along the Bishop Pass Trail almost seven years to the day since we last climbed it.

Chocolate Peak, elevation 11,682 feet, sits east of Long Lake along the Bishop Pass Trail and west of Cloudripper (elev. 13,525) and the Inconsolable Range. From a distance, the color of the rocks on Chocolate Peak resemble an ice cream sundae against the blue sky.

After purchasing supplies at the Bishop Creek Lodge, Kevin and I started our hike at 11 a.m. at a very busy South Lake trailhead. The repaving of the parking lot at the trailhead started the day after our hike, making this possibly my last hike up here in 2015. That's about a dozen hikes up here this year so I think I can wait.

The late morning was quite cool with a nice breeze blowing as we made our way up the initial steep portion of the trail. With South Lake to the right and Hurd Peak straight ahead, I knew it was going to be a great day, despite the apparent smoke all around.

Just over a half mile from the trailhead, we passed the trail to Treasure Lakes on the right and 0.8 mile later, the left turn to Marie Louise Lakes. Soon thereafter, we made a left onto the trail to Bull Lake and the three Chocolate Lakes. Earlier this year, and for quite some time, there was a wood sign screwed to a tree at the junction, but it is now gone.

We turned left and climbed a short, steep ravine and popped out at Bull Lake. On a clear day, the view from the shore is spectacular with Cloudripper behind and Chocolate Peak to the right. The trail then took us around to the east side of the lake and up another steep section to some level terrain at Lower Chocolate Lake. Even with the blurred views, this lake has great scenery and some great spots for a break.

We had nice hiking as we wound our way around Middle Chocolate Lake and finally Upper Chocolate Lake. The last lake sits in a granite basin directly below the Inconsolable Range. We took a nice long break here before starting a very steep climb, on a nice use trail, to the south ridge of Chocolate Peak. Twenty minutes later we were on the summit ridge and heading uphill towards the summit. This portion is all off-trail but the route finding is easy as there is only one way to go, up.

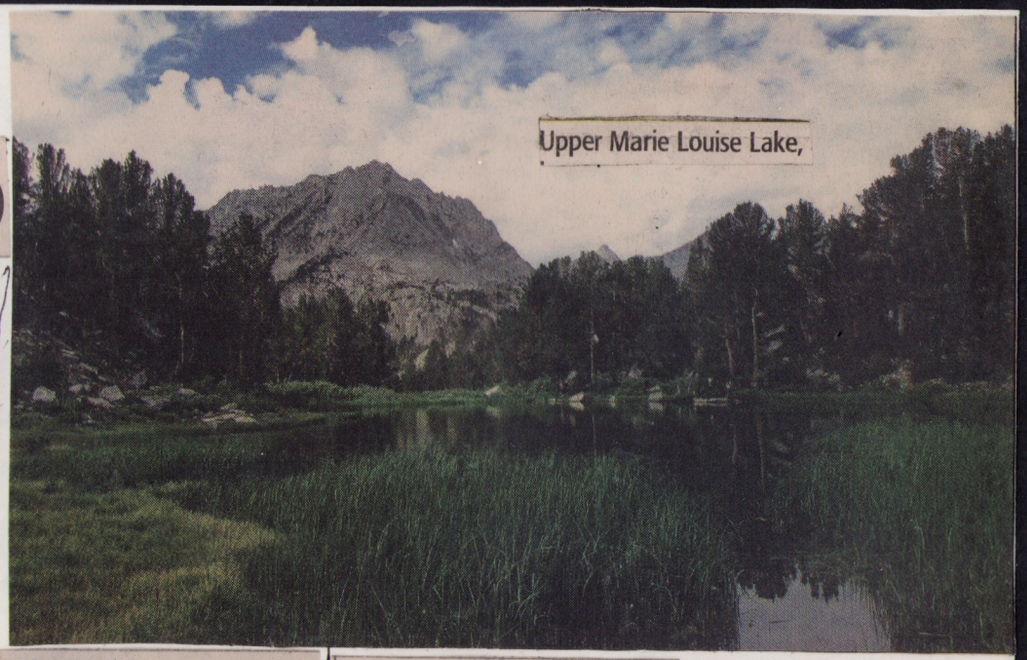
My son took the lead on the final stretch, leading us up the rocks and between the trees until we reached the summit at 1:15 p.m. Kevin was 17 when we first climbed Chocolate Peak and wore basketball shorts and sneakers. Now 24, he's become a full-fledged hiker while it has made me a very proud father.

At a glance:

- Trailhead parking area at South Lake under construction
- Smoke may alter views, be prepared
- 8 miles round trip, 1882 feet elevation gain
- Some steep sections and seldom used portions of the trail
- Many recent signatures in summit register

Satisfy your wanderlust along Chocolate Lakes Loop

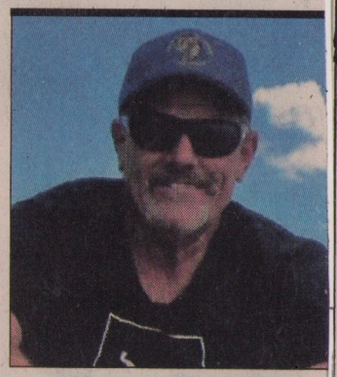
2014



Upper Marie Louise Lake,

Located less than a mile from the busy Bishop Pass Trail, the aptly named Chocolate Lakes Loop packs in a heaping amount of Sierra grandeur with moderate elevation gain. Situated beneath the very dramatic and impressive Inconsolable Range, the Chocolate Lakes Loop will stimulate and eventually satisfy your senses with pristine lakes and artistic scenery. Side trips to Marie Louise Lakes and the summit of Chocolate Peak make this hike perfect in less than 10 miles of effort.

To reach the trailhead from Bishop head west on West Line Street, or State Route 168, for 15 miles to the turnoff for South Lake. A left turn here and seven miles later will bring you to the end of the road and the day-use parking area at South Lake. The upper parking area is for overnight backpackers and the lower area near the restrooms is for day hikers and casual sightseers. Please abide by these restrictions because backpackers have limited parking and must park a mile down the road near Parcher's Resort if the upper lot is full.



CRAIG JACKSON
COLUMNIST

Start the hike at the sign for the Bishop Pass Trail and immediately descend slightly before starting up the well-graded east side of depressingly low South Lake. In less than a mile start up a short gully and then attack some mild switchbacks before entering John Muir Wilderness in less than a mile.

In 0.7 mile pass a junction on the right to Treasure Lakes and enjoy some level walking through a forest of lodgepole pine then cross Marie Louise Lakes outlet creek.

At the 1.5 mile mark, encounter a junction on the left to Marie Louise Lakes, named after the wife of Parchers Resort founder William Parcher. There is an excellent chance for absolute seclusion here which is obvious by the lack of use on the trail. Of the two Marie Louise Lakes, the lower one is the largest at 800 feet long and an elevation of 10,600 feet. The two lakes sit at the base of the west end of the Inconsolable Range and are a perfect destination for casual hikers or an easy backpacking weekend. There are also magnificent views of Chocolate Peak, Mount Goode, Hurd Peak and Cloudripper.

After spending some leisure time at Marie Louise Lakes return back to the Bishop Pass Trail and turn left. In just 0.2 mile and mild elevation gain turn left at the signed junction to "Chocolate Lake." At 2.3 miles from the trailhead arrive at picturesque Bull Lake with Chocolate Peak straight ahead and Cloudripper, the high peak to the left, dominating the skyline. Photo opportunities abound here with the red and white rock on Chocolate Peak, the gray granite of the Inconsolable Range and the blue water of Bull Lake.

Continue on the trail around the northeast shore of Bull Lake towards a somewhat steep rocky gully and then arrive at the shore of small lower Chocolate Lake. The trail then follows the west shore of lower Chocolate Lake, east side of middle Chocolate Lake and finally the west side of upper Chocolate Lake. Middle Chocolate Lake is bigger than the lower lake but smaller than upper Chocolate Lake, which lies in a granite basin. Highest of all the lakes, at 11,100 feet, the brown color is a stark contrast to the red, white and gray colors of the surrounding mountains.

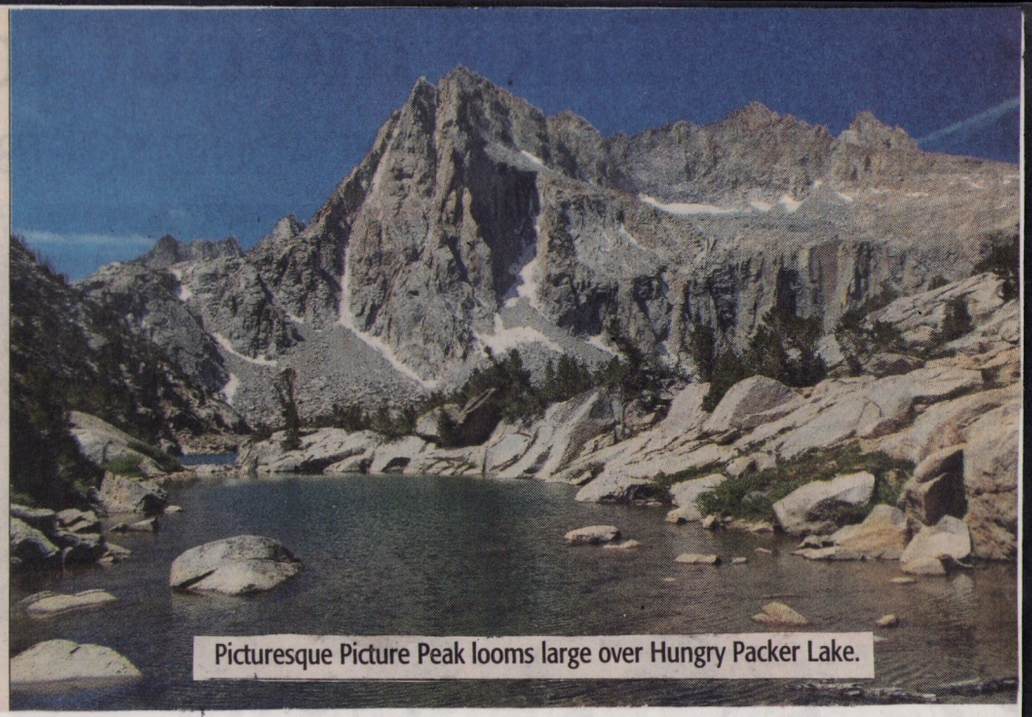
After 4.4 miles of hiking and six incredibly beautiful lakes under your belt, it's now time to make a decision. Either retrace your steps back to the trailhead or continue up the head wall to the saddle at 11,340 feet offering incredible views. If you choose the latter, another decision is needed. I suggest going straight up the south ridge of Chocolate Peak for a half mile to the summit at 11,682 feet. The 360-degree views from the top are absolutely incredible with peaks and lakes in every direction. This is a great lunch spot while resting tired feet and enjoying the sweet smell of nature.

Head back down the south ridge to the trail and then enjoy the descent to the north shore of Ruwau Lake, directly beneath Picture Puzzle Peak to the south. Follow the steep trail past Ruwau's outlet creek for about a mile to the junction with the Bishop Pass Trail, completing the loop.Turn right here and then walk beside Long Lake for 0.6 mile and then begin the descent back to the trailhead at South Lake.

AT A GLANCE:

- 9,800 feet at trailhead; 11,100 feet at Upper Chocolate Lake; 11,682 feet at Chocolate Peak
- 8.5 miles round trip including Marie Louise Lakes and Chocolate Peak
- Eight beautiful lakes
- Great camping and fishing
- Possible sudden thunderstorms
- Many hikes to choose in Bishop Creek area
- Mosquitoes and wildflowers in early summer

Blue Lake



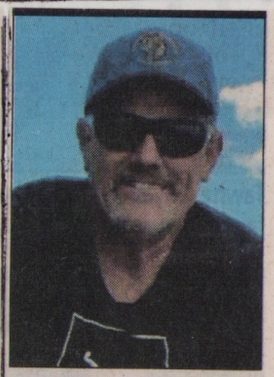
Picturesque Picture Peak looms large over Hungry Packer Lake.

Beat the valley heat, leave the crowds behind and venture out to Sabrina Basin for a fun day of hiking to many pristine alpine lakes with views that are some of the best in the Sierra Nevada.

With temperatures in the Owens Valley surpassing the century mark, make the short drive to Lake Sabrina and hike to one of the many lakes from the trailhead near the dam. Large or small, each lake is an alpine treasure tucked below dramatic peaks with great fishing and camping opportunities.

Because there is no maintained trail over the Sierra Crest into Kings Canyon National Park, traffic should be less than trails that cross the crest like the Bishop Pass Trail or Piute Pass trail.

To get to the trailhead from downtown Bishop go west on State Route 168 West, or West Line Street, for about 18.5 miles to the trailhead on the left side just before the dam at the end of the road. There is limited parking for day hikers at the trailhead but you can park at the dam and walk back 100 feet to the start of the hike. There is no overnight parking at the trailhead; therefor, backpackers must park at the lot one-half mile down the road just below the junction to North Lake.



CRAIG JACKSON
GUEST COLUMNIST

Start the hike on a well-graded trail lined with aspen trees that follows the east shore of Lake Sabrina for the first 1.3 miles. Pass the trail junction to George Lake and then cross its outlet creek, vigorous in early season, then begin a series of switchbacks that take you uphill until rounding a corner with a beautiful view of Mount Haeckel and the Sierra Crest at 2.5 miles.

Enter a boulder-filled ravine with granite steps masterfully created by the California Conservation Corps, and emerge at the north end of Blue Lake at 2.8 miles and an elevation of 10,390 feet.

Cross the lake's outlet on some logs and follow a rock-lined trail over some granite along the west shore. There are many spots here to stop and enjoy the views of the lake, have a snack and some liquid refreshment and the view of 13,494-foot Mount Thompson. There are also many wonderful campsites here and great fishing for trout. Once back on the trail quickly encounter a junction to Donkey Lake and Dingleberry Lake. This trip goes right towards Dingleberry Lake, Midnight Lake and Hungry Packer Lake.

Once you've reached Blue Lake, most of the uphill climbing has been done. Hiking past Blue Lake is over an enjoyable path with mild elevation gain but please pay close attention because at times the route crosses granite slabs, which makes it difficult to tell its direction. Follow the outline of rocks that marks its direction. The trail ascends mildly to a saddle overlooking Dingleberry Lake and then you'll descend to the south shore, where there's excellent camping and fishing, at 4.5 miles from the trailhead.

The trail to Midnight Lake and Hungry Packer Lake continues in a southwest direction through a forest of lodgepole pines, granite slabs and marshy tarns with mild elevation gain and breathtaking scenery. After a few moderate switchbacks, come upon a signed trail to Hungry Packer Lake to the left and Midnight Lake straight ahead. Go straight and pass a small pond, climb some easy steps and arrive at Midnight Lake below Mount Darwin at 10,988 feet. Spend a moment there and then return to the previous junction and go right to Hungry Packer Lake at 6.5 miles.

Less than a mile of more moderate elevation gain on a well graded trail brings you to the north shore of stunning Hungry Packer Lake at just over 11,000 feet and 7 miles from the trailhead, with the perfectly named Picture Peak as the backdrop. Pick a granite slab for a memorable lunch and enjoy the cool breeze and incredible alpine scenery.

If motivated, climb up the ridge to the east for absolutely breathtaking views of Mount Thompson, Moonlight Lake, Clyde Spires, Picture Peak and Mount Darwin, to name a few. If you brought your fishing pole make a cast and hope for a prize-winning trout or if camping, pitch a tent and spend the night under the stars.

Once your visual senses are finally satisfied at Hungry Packer Lake, start retracing your steps back down the trail. Enjoy the downhill hiking, paying attention to the trail direction on the granite steps back towards Blue Lake. If inclined to do so, stop at Blue Lake and dip your feet in the clear, cool water before tackling the final 2.8 miles to the trailhead.

2014

AT A GLANCE:

- Abundant summer wildflowers
- Excellent fall colors
- Mosquitoes in June and July
- Great camping and fishing
- 5.6 miles roundtrip to Blue Lake, 14 miles roundtrip to Midnight Lake and Hungry Packer Lake
- 9,080' feet at trailhead; 10,388 feet at Blue Lake; 10,988 feet at Midnight Lake and 11,100' at Hungry Packer Lake

(Craig Jackson is a Bishop resident and avid hiker/backpacker who enjoys exploring his new backyard after having relocated here last year from Southern California.)

Picture
PEAK

WAGON WHEELS CAN CUT THROUGH ROCK

Old Sherwin Toll Road offers a glimpse into the past

By Bodine

There's a slice of history on the side of the hill between Swall Meadows and Highway 395. It's a wagon trail circa the 1860s, one of the first routes from the Owens Valley to the top of Sherwin Grade. The wagon wheels weighed down with rock, lumber and ore, have driven deep grooves into the soft Bishop tuff, gouges in the rock are more than a foot deep in places.

The road was one of many built by J.L.C. Sherwin. In the book "Old Mammoth" by Adele Reed, Sherwin's grandson Fred Brooks is quoted, "My Aunt Nannie sent me a letter. She told me my grandfather built a road from Round Valley up and over Sherwin Summit in the 1870s."

Mining in Mammoth was cooking and Sherwin and partners, James and Joseph Rowin, expended the road north, one of many Sherwin Toll Roads.

"Sherwin, being the industrious bastard that he was," McNeill wrote, "had a logging road to capitalize on the lumber scene for home building, mining and whatever."

Reed quotes Sam Wilson, identified only as descendants of the owners of Swall Meadows, formerly Sherwin Meadows, "The route south and over the Toll Road was a rough one, hard on stage travelers. Sometimes they pulled in at Sherwin Meadows to rest and some would camp overnight."

Historian David McNeill told The Sheet by e-mail that the High Road went past Sand Canyon and came out at Tom's Place.

McNeill says in a blog post titled, "Old Wagons Roads of Sherwin Grade" on his website, windyscotty.wordpress.com, that Sherwin had built a Dry Road when the High Road got snowed in. McNeill adds that Sherwin employed local Paiutes for labor.

These routes are some of the many toll roads that Sherwin built, McNeill writes, "Both of these roads were freight toll roads. The big teams had to use them and had no choice. The other locals in light wagons had their own routes up to avoid the toll and get places far quicker."

The hills are littered with wagon roads and trails, the tracks of tough men looking for a softer way through the rocks. "They constantly found new ways to go and abandoned the original routes."

"By the 1870s, the 18-mule freight teams were pulling the grade to supply Bodie and Aurora, another mining town in the area. They were locked in the deep ruts and had to have pull-outs. That is why you will see parallel roads for going and coming," according to McNeill.

The roads remained and were used until blacktop was laid for U.S. 395. "As soon as autos came on the scene, they would have been using the roads, and the first dozers were going up the grade by the late '20s leaving track marks."

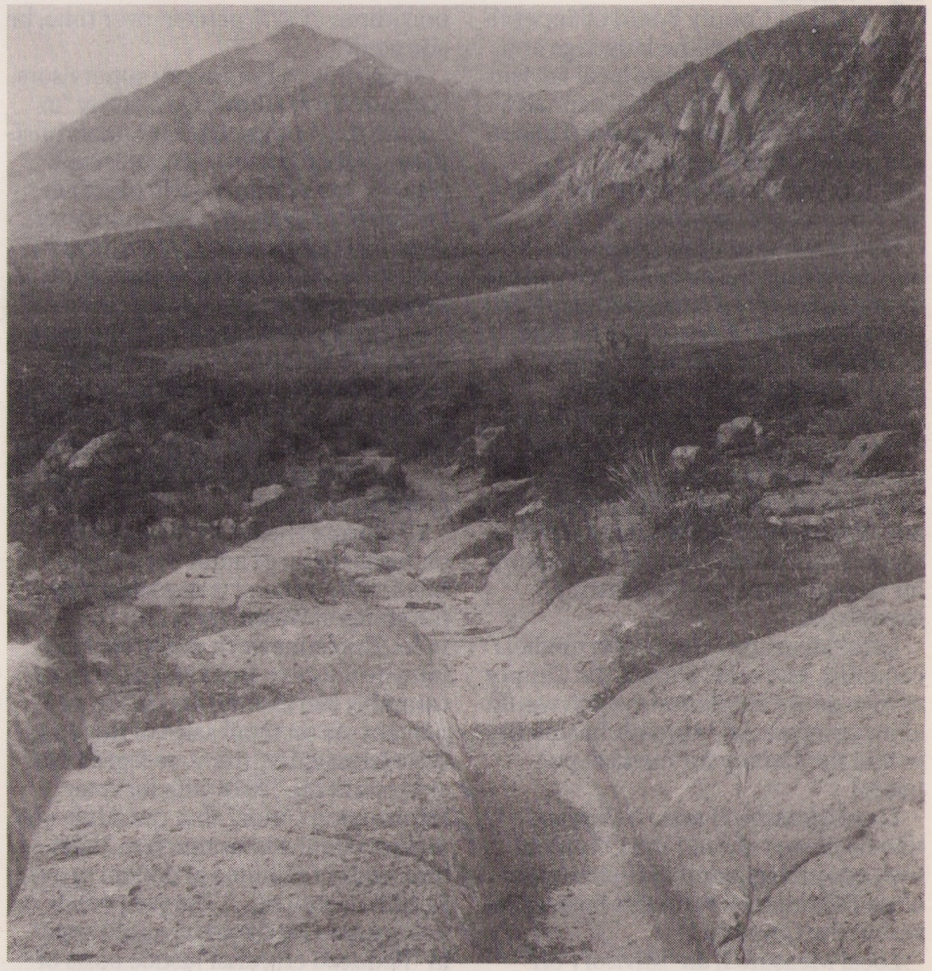


PHOTO:BODINE

Ruts in the rock: The Old Sherwin Toll Road.

Today, a sweet downhill single-track mountain bike trail parallels the High Road. To get to the trail, turn on Swall Meadows Road, and a couple hundred yards from the intersection, there's a small, unmarked dirt pullout on the south side. Walk from there.

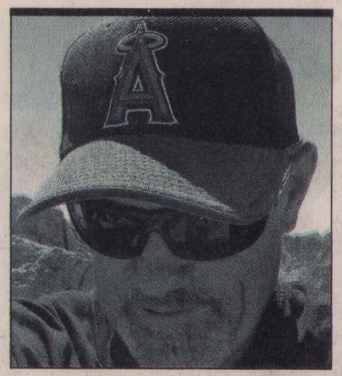
(Hiked on Oct. 8, 2016)

The long hot dog days of summer seem to be a thing of the past as fall brings colder mornings and mild afternoons. Hiking in shorts and a T-shirt while sweating profusely on a sun-drenched Sierra Nevada trail has quickly come to an abrupt halt, transforming into a cold and windy adventure bundled up in winter gear. The sad part of this annual cycle of life is that snow-free hiking in the Sierra is coming to a close for 2016.

A very busy schedule of late has kept the hiking to a minimum, having only hiked once in a two-week period. An open day last Saturday led to an opportunity to go outside, and with so little time off lately, a long hike would be the only thing satisfying.

Unbelievably so, it had been over a year since I had hiked up the Sabrina Basin trail out of Lake Sabrina, to Blue Lake and Donkey Lake, so a decision was made to start early and hike to the end of the maintained trail at Midnight Lake. The six-mile trek begins at an elevation of 9,080 feet and culminates below massive peaks at an elevation of 10,988 feet, perfect Sierra Nevada scenery.

Early mornings in the Owens Valley, and especially in the resort mountain communities, have been quite cold lately, ranging from the 40s to the high 20s at higher elevations. Last Saturday was no exception when the hike began promptly at 7:15 a.m. The temperature gauge in my car measured the outside temperature at 34 degrees, even colder in the shade when my boots hit the trail.



CRAIG JACKSON
COLUMNIST

The first mile moderately climbs above Lake Sabrina before reaching the turnoff for George Lake before crossing its outlet then begins a nice set of well designed switchbacks. The outside temperature didn't stop my body from producing sweat drops, forcing the removal of the hooded sweatshirt (tied around waist), beanie and gloves while making good time up to Blue Lake, arriving at 8:30 a.m.

I have always loved Blue Lake for a few reasons. First, the setting is quintessential High Sierra scenery with Thompson Ridge and 13,494-foot Mt. Thompson above a masterpiece like Blue Lake. Second, there are some great camping spots around Blue Lake with many hiking opportunities for miles. Lastly, the steep part of the hike is over at Blue Lake, meaning the last three miles to Midnight Lake are extremely enjoyable.

I was at Blue Lake before the sun had risen above the ridge, leaving a calm surface and a great kind of quiet. The trail leaves Blue Lake on a granite path, sometimes hard to follow, for another mile then descends shortly to the shore of Dingleberry Lake. I took a short break in a nice spot I had been to before, next to the inlet on the south side of the small lake.

There is a perfect meadow next to the trail to Midnight Lake five miles from Lake Sabrina.

Photo by Craig Jackson

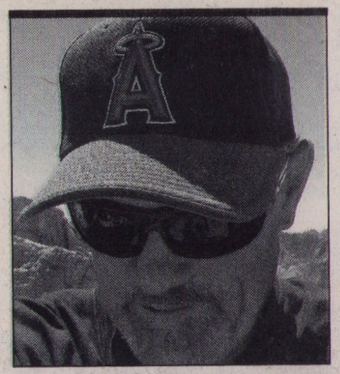
From here on, the trail does have some places where it's difficult to follow, I just kept hiking with the assistance of some well-placed rocks and previous hikers boot prints. I crossed North Fork Bishop Creek on some rock steps and also saw dozens of trout apparently swimming upstream to do their thing. Continued hiking next to Midnight Lake's outlet brought me to a gorgeous meadow with a small waterfall at its southern end, another perfect photo op.

I happily reached the turnoff for Hungry Packer Lake with the past knowledge that there was only a half mile left to Midnight Lake, just out of sight over the bench ahead. It was straight up 10 a.m. when I got to Midnight Lake and let me say, this was the coldest spot of the day so far. Resting and laying in direct sunlight at 11,000 feet, I hung out for a short period of time trying to find a warm spot.

It sure was nice being back up in Sabrina Basin and hiking next to 13,000-foot peaks and alongside picturesque lakes, reminds me to make a plan to come back as soon as possible.

(Craig Jackson is a Bishop resident and avid hiker/backpacker who enjoys exploring his new backyard after having relocated here in 2013 from Southern California. Email him at Sierracj51@gmail.com.)

(Hiked on Oct. 19, 2016)



CRAIG JACKSON
COLUMNIST

Due to a reoccurring right ankle annoyance, last weekend was spent slightly recuperating with only mild exploring on an old mining road above South Fork Bishop Creek Canyon.

A hike in the Sierra Nevada doesn't always have to be on one of the busy well-maintained trails available to everyone, but can also be an off-trail experience in one of my favorite places, an old lonely mining road. With so many to choose from in this historical part of the Eastern Sierra, I chose a familiar path above Bishop Creek Canyon that has superior views and a golden opportunity to see some beautiful California mule deer.

Back in 1942 Art Schober built a road up the east side of South Fork Bishop Creek Canyon in search of his fortune in gold. Unfortunately for him he didn't find the mother lode, but he did leave behind an old road that has become a great hiking trail, closed to motorized vehicles.

I've written many Sierra Sojourns about Bishop Creek Canyon because it's the reason why I live in Bishop now, falling in love with the incredible peaks and lakes more than two decades ago. It may sound redundant at times, but with so many miles of hiking behind me now it gets a little difficult trying to plan new adventures, while driving as less as possible to get there.

On the drive up Highway 168 from downtown Bishop, the road travels near historic dirt roads in Buttermilk Country, as well as others in lower Bishop Creek Canyon near Intake II and a short hike at Cardinal Village to the Cardinal Mine in Aspendell. Most of these roads were built many decades ago by brave men, but today they're used for our recreational enjoyment.

I parked in a turnout just past Bishop Creek Lodge on South Lake Road at 11 a.m. on a clear, windy day. There was still a lot of fall color on the canyon bottom next to South Fork Bishop Creek, which was rushing mildly at 8,400 feet above sea level. My plan was to hike up the old Schober Mine Road for two and a half hours, exploring the small mine site then continuing on the deteriorating mine road to parts unknown.

The trail leaves South Lake Road and crosses the creek within a few steps before turning left past a house next to a beautiful waterfall. The road is now more of a single track trail with some dense vegetation on the east side. I passed the old "Road closed to motorized vehicles" sign and began climbing up the east side of the canyon with expanding views every step of the way. The trail rises steeply through a small grove of giant aspen trees above the small community of South Fork, nestled next to the creek below.

Here is part of the old Schober Mine above South Fork Bishop Creek Canyon.

Photo by Craig Jackson

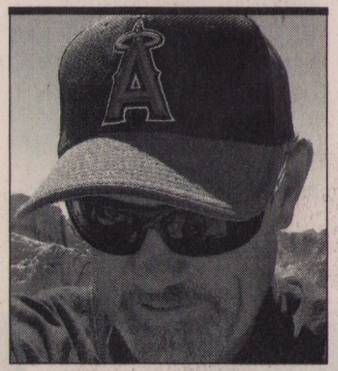
I turned right on the road above the canyon and enjoyed some easy walking while noticing a small herd of deer, all does and fawns magically camouflaged in the trees some 200 feet higher. It took an hour and 10 minutes to hike 2.3 miles to the base of what I call "Bishop Creek Pinnacle," a rocky outcrop 100 feet above the trail. I climbed to the top and was rewarded with a perfect view up canyon to 13,000-foot peaks, as well as Mt. Tom, Basin Mountain and 13,986-foot Mount Humphreys.

A trail junction was reached four miles from the start that heads to Coyote Flat but I kept straight for a half mile to the old mine site. There's a small log cabin and other remnants of the activities that took place in the 1940s. I explored the excavation area and pondered what it was like working there so many years ago. Once my nice, quiet lunch was done, I continued hiking to the end of the road about a mile farther then turned around and started heading back down. Luckily for me I saw more mule deer on the hike back while enjoying the awesome views.

(Craig Jackson is a Bishop resident and avid hiker/backpacker who enjoys exploring his new backyard after having relocated here in 2013 from Southern California.)

Making something out of nothing

(Hiked on Jan. 21, 2017)



CRAIG JACKSON
COLUMNIST

Going hiking doesn't necessarily mean that it has to be a sweaty uphill affair on a dusty trail in summer, it also could be described as a leisurely walk next to a slow-moving stream in the dead of winter. There are many differences between the two types of "movement," but in the long run each is a hike in its own right. When the trails in the high country are covered in many feet of snow and it's not even possible to reach the trailhead, there's nothing better than a great hike near Owens River and Volcanic Tablelands.

I've driven down Dixon Lane in North Bishop many times but had never stopped to really check it out until two weeks ago when I spent an entire day walking alongside the Bishop Creek Canal to the Owens River. The hike began with very little anticipation as I was just looking forward to getting outside after a snowy Friday and extremely cold temperatures.

Honestly, I must say that I prefer a hike on a dusty trail high up in the mountains rather than a level walk on a dirt road, but sometimes you have to take what you can get. I wasn't out to reach any summit or alpine lake, just to enjoy the fresh air in my hometown of Bishop.

It was a Saturday in between storms and one day away from the "storm of the decade" (and it was). I left home at 11 a.m. driving south on U.S. Highway 395 for two miles and turned left onto northbound U.S. Highway 6. Before reaching the speed limit, I turned left on Dixon Lane at then a right at the canal. The dirt road here is drivable by all cars but I chose to pull over immediately and park in one of the few spots on the right side next to the canal.

Within a second of exiting my vehicle I could tell there was something special in the air and that I was in for a great experience. The magnificent colors of nature were the first thing that caught my eye, especially the snow-capped mountains and the clear blue sky, along with the vibrant hues of the Owens River Valley. I immediately noticed three trees on the east side of the canal that were perfectly placed there next to the quiet stream, requiring me to take a moment and some pictures.

I started walking on the west side of the canal in a northwesterly direction with enormous-looking Mount Tom straight ahead reflecting in a section of slow-moving water; it's quite the idyllic setting, something to be stared at. Right away I could see this was going to be something more than just a walk. As it turned out, it became more of a bird-watching extravaganza.

Standing stiff and silent and waiting for a fish to swim by, a great blue heron waited motionless for its next meal. A half mile later, I was on top of a small rise admiring the 360-degree views when I noticed three large white birds in a small pond some 300 yards away. I crept behind a low berm until I was 100 yards away and discovered there were three snow geese floating in the rain-made temporary lake. Even with my incredible stealthiness, they knew every step I was taking the entire time and flew off before I could get an up-close photo.

A Cooper's hawk clings to a branch alongside the Bishop Creek Canal near the Owens River.

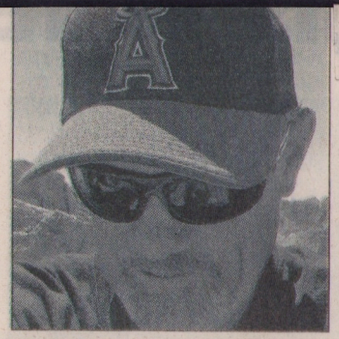
Photo by Craig Jacks

Shortly after leaving the geese I heard a raptor screech from above and spotted an American kestrel eyeballing me from the top of a leafless tree next to the canal. What a cool looking bird with its blue, orange and brown-colored feathers draping its falcon-like body. I spent a few minutes trying to get a good shot but the little guy eluded me and took off into another tree where I saw a belted kingfisher (small body big head). I used to see these birds frequently when I walked the Bolsa Chica Wetlands in Huntington Beach but this is the first one I've seen while living in Bishop. I scoured all the trees in the area and saw two red tailed hawks on the same branch, a snowy egret by the canal and a woodpecker doing what it's meant to do.

My turnaround point was where the canal begins at the Owens River, roughly 3.5 miles from my car. Prior to getting there I saw the "Bird of the Day," a Cooper's hawk that landed on top of a bush some 20 feet away and stayed there while I got some nice pictures before flying away, not to be seen again. I had nice sandwich with some momma cows and their calves before heading back. While the sun started setting behind the mountains I was happily outside longer than I had planned.

(Craig Jackson is a Bishop resident and avid hiker/backpacker who enjoys exploring his new backyard after having relocated here in 2013 from Southern California. Email him at Sierraci51@gmail.com.)

South Lake still smothered in snow



CRAIG JACKSON
COLUMNIST

With fishing season starting at the end of this month, there will undoubtedly be a lot more people driving up to Bishop Creek Canyon and exploring the streams for fresh trout. If any of the fishermen plan on trying their luck at South Lake, they're going to need to bring either snowshoes or skis, along with fishing poles, because there's 10 feet of snow in the parking lots at South Lake. South Lake Road is presently closed at its normal winter closure spot, 4.7 miles from South Lake just past the Bishop Creek Lodge (it is presently being plowed up to South Lake). Curiosity was driving me nuts last week so I ventured up into the south fork and hiked in the snow to the Bishop Pass trailhead at the upper parking area at the end of the road.

The original plan for the day was to hike up from the road closure on Highway 168 in Aspendell to Lake Sabrina first and then North Lake on the way back. I wasn't really thinking about South Lake until I approached the turnoff where I made a left and drove the two miles to the road closure. To my surprise, the road beyond the closure looked as though it had been plowed, but for how long was the big question. It's nearly 5 miles from here to South Lake and the only question I had was, "Could it be plowed all the way to South Lake?" At that point I changed all plans and started hiking up the road, not knowing what to expect.

The time was a little before 10 a.m. when I headed off, under partially cloudy skies and a nice down-canyon breeze; absolute paradise. I was prepared for winter conditions and brought the proper attire, just in case, knowing ahead of time that I may need them. The scenery heading up South Fork Bishop Creek Canyon is truly spectacular, even while hiking on an asphalt road, normally not my cup of tea.

The snow alongside the road was getting deeper and then there it was, the end of the plowed road only 1.5 miles from the start. I didn't have snowshoes or skis, but I did have my trusty hiking boots and a desire to see South Lake, so off I went on the hard-packed snow. The sun was reflecting brightly and even with sunglasses on I was still squinting. It was hard to tell how deep the snow was but the street signs kept getting smaller and smaller, while the drifts became higher and higher. Two miles in I passed the Tyee Lakes trailhead and was shocked by the lack of snow on the bridge over South Fork Bishop Creek. I was expecting it to be covered.

Walking on the snow was easy as I approached historic Parchers Resort at the 3.6 mile mark. It was eerily silent as I walked from cabin to cabin taking pictures of the snow-bound compound. There was 3 feet or more of snow on some of the cabins and a huge stack on top of the General Store. Hopefully most of it melts before the resort opens in May.

The sky was a magnificent blue above Weir Pond with the Sierra Crest looming in the background as I rounded a corner and made the final push to South Lake. The snow must have been 10 feet deep or more at the lower parking area and higher than the public restroom. I reached the end of the road at the Bishop Pass trailhead and actually stood on top of the sign as the snow was that deep. The lake was snow-covered while the coliseum of peaks behind glowed with a snowy white mantle. It was nice being the only person there because I knew that not before long this popular spot will be flooded with humans, enjoying nature just how I was at that moment. The views were spectacular but I must say I am so looking forward to seeing some dirt and getting my boots on some high sierra trails.

General Store at the historic Parchers Resorts almost buried in snow.

Photo by Craig Jackso

(Craig Jackson is a Bisho resident and avid hiker/ backpacker who enjoys exploring his new backyard after having relocated here in 2013 from Southern California. Email him at Sierraci51@amail.com.)

It was one of those last minute decisions that turned out to be a great one. I received a text message from Sarah early in the morning asking me if I wanted to join her and Peter on a nice late afternoon hike out of Lake Sabrina to Blue Lake. Do some fishing, take some pictures and have a few laughs. How could I resist? Yes was my answer, which I answered enthusiastically.

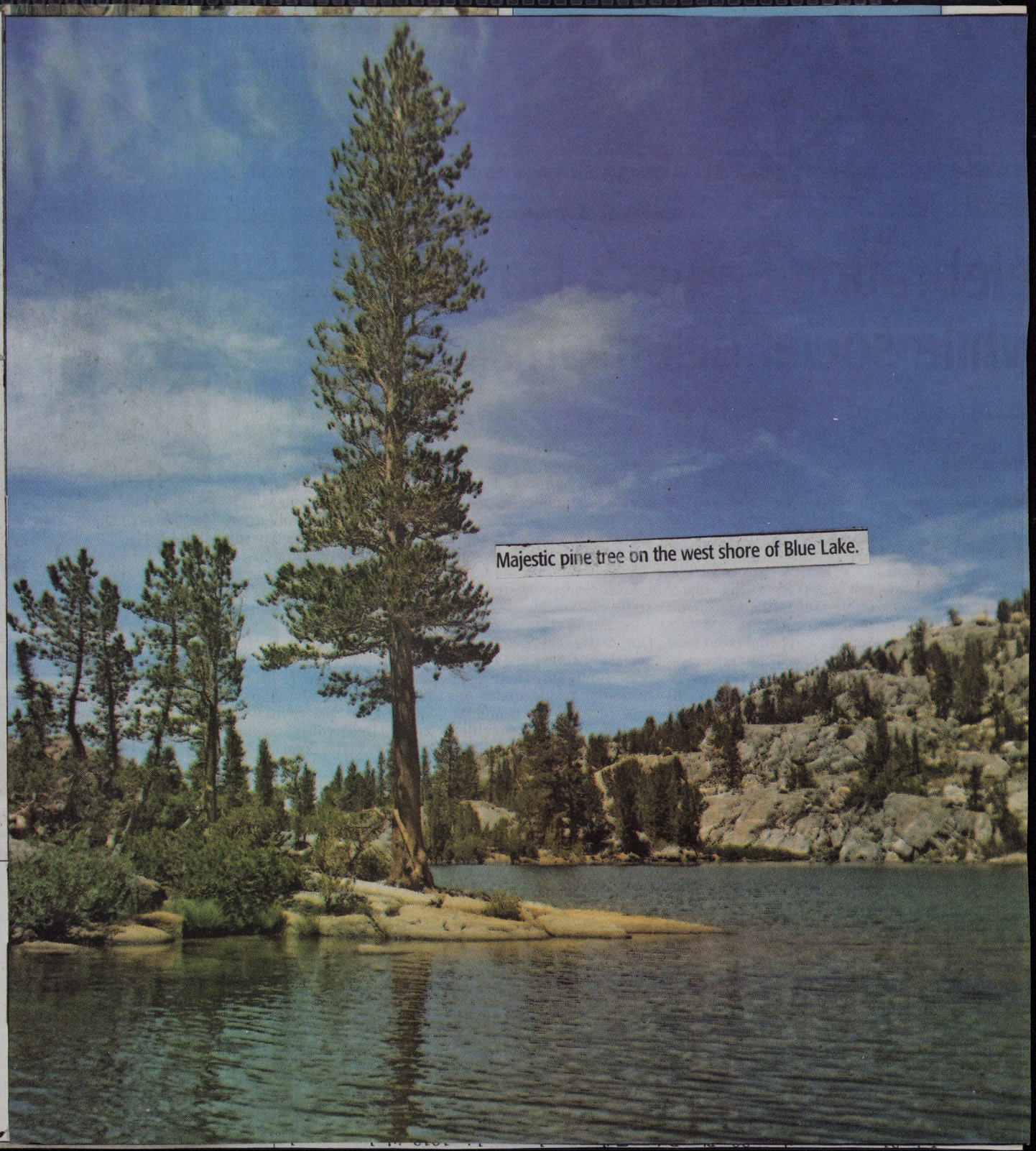
After a long day at work, I arrived at the Sabrina Basin trailhead exactly one minute prior to Sarah and Peter's arrival. It was a gorgeous evening at Lake Sabrina, like a nice and warm summer day. The three of us showed an equal amount of eagerness, obviously happy to be on a mountain trail. Peter planned on perfecting his fly fishing technique while Sarah and I planned to just hang out and enjoy ourselves. We were definitely headed to the perfect spot for that.

It's less than two and half miles to Blue Lake, but the 1,300-foot elevation gain puts it in the mildly moderate category. Sarah led the way as we followed the trail on the left side of Lake Sabrina, then past the turnoff for the steep climb to George Lake. We could hear the roaring sound of George Lake's outlet stream ahead of us, which is sometimes a tough crossing, but not this day. None of our boots got wet as we rock hopped over the rushing water, onto one huge boulder then back on the trail.

A handful of switchbacks followed, which led us to a vantage point with a spectacular view of the high Sierra peaks to the south. Although it was clear and crisp outside, we all noticed the rapid drop in temperature, which prompted us to put on our jackets for the last mile.

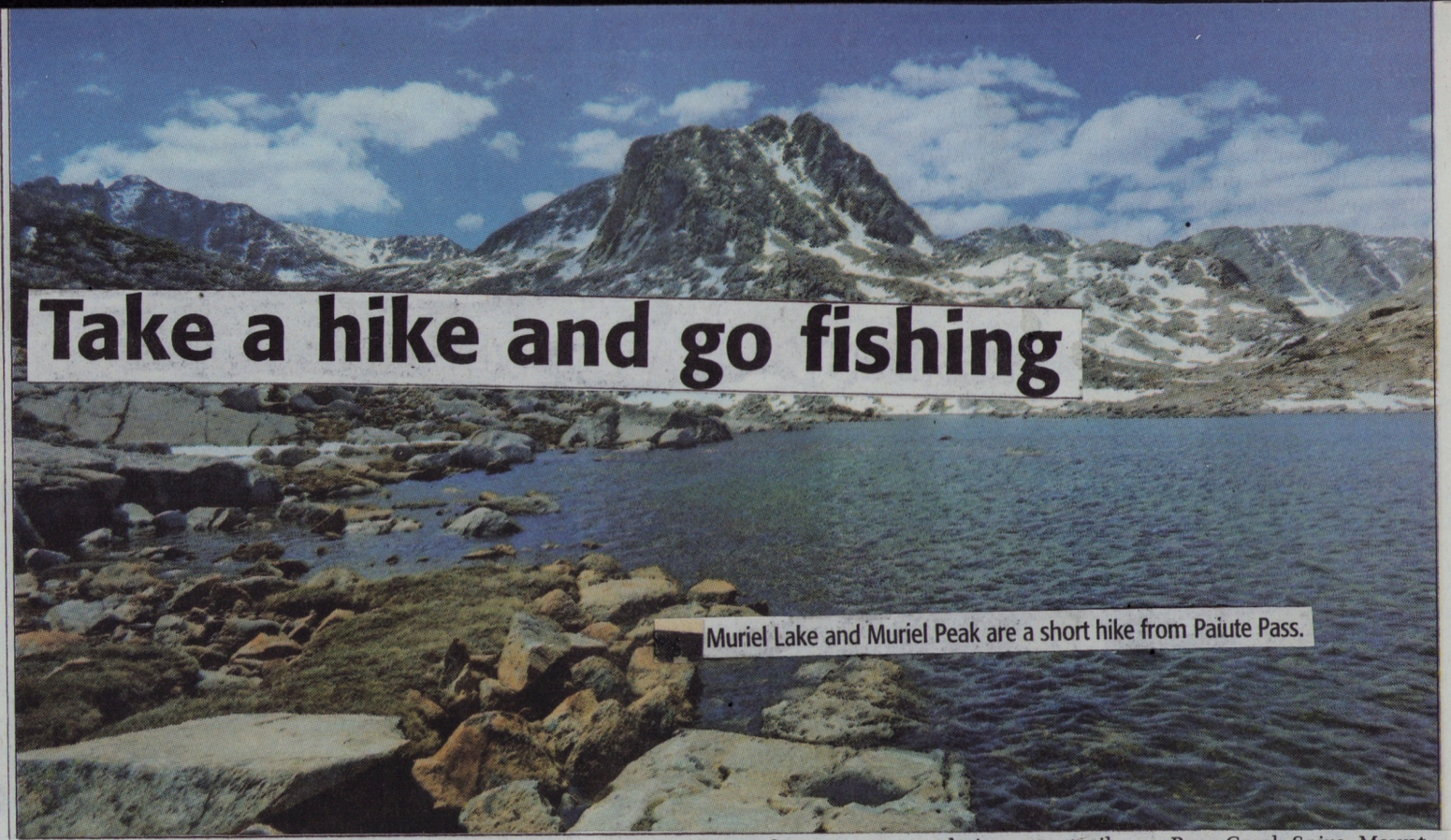
It was a little after 5 p.m. as we made the final push and arrived at incredibly beautiful Blue Lake. The sun was lighting up Thompson Ridge to the southeast and making the still water glisten. It was totally perfect. Peter was anxious to go fishing and try out his new rod, so we followed the trail around the west side and found the ideal spot. We found a small cove tucked between a few dozen pine trees, a quintessential spot to catch some nice trout. Before Peter started fishing, he reached down into his backpack and stunned me with a nice cold beer. It was definitely a pleasant surprise.

We were having so much fun that we didn't want to leave, but the sun was starting to set behind the mountains to the west and it was time to go. It took a little over an hour to make our way back down the trail to our cars, and while we departed we also agreed to do this again.



Majestic pine tree on the west shore of Blue Lake.

Take a hike and go fishing



Muriel Lake and Muriel Peak are a short hike from Paiute Pass.

CRAIG JACKSON
COLUMNIST

Of all the great outdoor activities available in the Owens Valley and Eastern Sierra, I'm going to guess that fishing ranks very high up on that list.

People flock here from all directions to enjoy nature and try their luck in our beautiful lakes and streams.

Followed closely by my favorite activity, hiking also draws thousands to the famous John Muir and Pacific Crest Trails, as well as other basins and canyons. High up in the Sierra and a few miles from any trailheads are pristine lakes that are loaded with all different types of beautiful trout. So if you're not in the mood for a crowded shoreline filled with other fishermen and have a few hours to spare here are three lakes that involve a semi-long hike with a full-on fishing reward.

Midnight Lake sits at an elevation of 10,988 feet and is one and a quarter miles east of 13,831 Mount Darwin in Sabrina Basin. The trailhead is west of Bishop on Highway 168 just below the dam at Lake Sabrina. For the first 1.5 miles the trail rises gently above the east shore of Lake Sabrina, passing a junction on the left up to George Lake. The trail gets a little steeper here as it traverses some granite slabs. Look back here towards Lake Sabrina and notice the masterful red color of the Piute Crags. Early morning hours are the best to see them as the sun rises over the White Mountains to the east.

A tad under three miles and 1,300 feet higher than the trailhead, arrive at picture-perfect Blue Lake. Very popular with backpackers because of its great camping spots, Blue Lake is a perfect spot for a rest before continuing up the trail. Try your luck here, there's always plenty of fish swimming near the outlet and the western shore.

Gather yourself after the break and follow the trail to the junction with the trail to Donkey Lake and turn right. The elevation gain is mild from here as the trail passes Dingleberry Lake and a turnoff to Hungry Packer Lake. Beyond the junction the last mile rolls over two benches and arrives at Midnight Lake. This beauty is in a granite basin and is teeming with wild trout. I've caught and released magnificent fish here and hope to get back this year.

The second lake that requires a moderate hike to get to and is great for fishing is Muriel Lake, less than a mile from popular Piute Pass. A beautiful blue lake with the awesome backdrop of 12,942-foot Muriel Peak is a perfect day hike, only five-plus miles from the trailhead at North Lake Campground. The shoreline at Muriel Lake is perfect for fishing with a multitude of spots to choose from.

To get started on this trek head west on West Line Street out of Bishop to the North Lake turnoff, a mile past Aspendell. Follow the asphalt/dirt road to the hiker parking area past North Lake and next to the stables. Walk a half mile to the North Lake Campground and jump on the signed trail to Piute Pass.

With backpack and fishing gear in tow, start up the moderate shady trail for 2.3 miles to the first of the Loch Leven Lakes. One mile later is Piute Lake with Piute Pass clearly visible to the west. Pass a very cool waterfall on the left and at 4.8 miles reach Piute Pass. Make a quick left on a obvious use-trail and follow it to the shore of big, blue Muriel Lake. Plant your butt, load your rod and check out the incredible scenery.

The final lake for great fishing after a moderate hike is Treasure Lakes, above Gem Lakes in Little Lakes Valley. With a short scramble up from the highest of the Gem Lakes, there is complete solitude and three pristine lakes with trout for the taking.

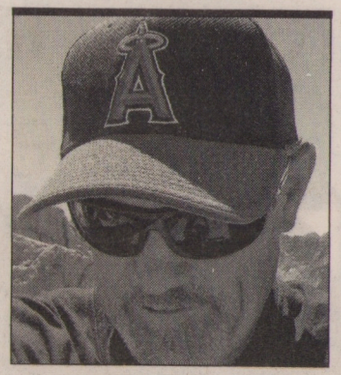
The trailhead is a couple of miles up from Rock Creek Lake at Mosquito Flat, 10,300 feet above sea level. Hike up the main trail into Little Lakes Valley with spectacular views of Bear Creek Spire, Mount Dade and others. Walk slowly next to a handful of picturesque lakes then turn right to Gem Lakes, after three glorious miles. Great spot for a break before climbing off-trail on the west side of the lake to an overview of the Treasure Lakes.

Pick a lake and a cool spot and try your luck for some mountain-born all-natural High Sierra trout.

(Craig Jackson is a Bishop resident and avid hiker/backpacker who enjoys exploring his new backyard after having relocated here in 2013 from Southern California. Email him at Sierracj51@gmail.com.)

Escape the heat at twelve thousand feet

(Hiked on Aug. 11, 2017)



CRAIG JACKSON
COLUMNIST

It may not be the best solution for cooling off during this extended heat wave in the Owens Valley, but being at Bishop Pass last Friday brought a smile to my face, a jacket on my back and gloves on my hands during a cold couple of hours at 11,972 feet.

I realize it's a long way to walk (5.75 miles one way) for cooler weather, but if you're able to get out and spend a day hiking the Bishop Pass Trail, you're assured a good time and relief from the summer sun. And also, seeing along the way some of the most dramatic and beautiful scenery in the entire Eastern Sierra. From jagged peaks on both sides of the trail to the many lakes and creeks that dot the landscape, this place is pure magic.

From the trailhead at South Lake (9,800 feet) to Bishop Pass climbs 5.75 miles past meadows with mule deer to its high-point at the pass (11,972 feet), then drops down to Dusy Basin and eventually the Pacific Crest and John Muir trails.

This would be considered a moderately difficult hike due to the mileage, but the 2,200-foot gain altogether is doable for average hikers.

It was a cloudless morning as I left Bishop at 5 a.m. westbound on California Highway 168. It's a mere 27 miles from home to South Lake, which put me at the trailhead at 5:30 a.m., just as the sun was rising in the eastern sky.

I knew ahead of time that the forecast was for clear and sunny skies, but at 12,000 feet in the Sierra Nevada, there's always a good chance of a summer thunderstorm or a cold wind. I packed the gloves in the bag, tied the jacket around my waist and was on the trail.

The hike to Bishop Pass and beyond starts at beautifully full South Lake and immediately drops down 20 steps before beginning its uphill motion. The ascent is somewhat steep for the first mile as the trail traverses above the lake and then turns up a short canyon. I passed the turnoff to Treasure Lakes at 1 mile and then enjoyed some easy hiking through a shaded forest. After passing trail junctions to Marie Louise Lakes and Chocolate Lakes, the trail brought me to the shore of aptly named Long Lake at 2.3 miles. I paused a moment here and took some pictures of 13,085-foot Mount Goode as the sun lit up its pointed peak with a bright orange alpenglow, while the water was still smothered in shade. Definitely was one of those Sierra moments.

I have to admit that I was a little worried about snow on the trail, but had yet to see any while passing the turnoff to Ruwau Lake at 3 miles from the trailhead. For me personally, this is the point where the hike turns from awesome to incredibly spectacular as the trail passes Spearhead Lake on the right and Timberline Tarns on the left.

The view from Bishop Pass into Dusy Basin is one of those classic Sierra Nevada vistas.

Photo by Craig Jacks

The uphill push on to the shore of large Saddlerock Lake, where another break was in order to capture the beauty on film, and then continuing up to Bishop Lake, at 4.2 miles.

It was 8:30 a.m. (and still hadn't seen anyone) as I began the final push to the pass, hiking in a massive boulder field with seeps and springs all around, mostly heard but not seen. The air at more than 11,000 feet is so crisp and clean that it's too bad you can't bottle it up and take it home.

A few minutes prior to 9 a.m. I crossed a large snowfield (only snow on the hike) and arrived at the signed pass and stepped into Kings Canyon National Park. I scrambled to the north for the jaw-dropping views back down South Fork Bishop Creek Canyon and its many lakes, then took off south towards Dusy Basin.

I plopped my butt down on a hard rock overlooking a myriad of lakes and peaks, including Isosceles Peak, Columbine Peak and Giraud Peak.

The 360-degree panorama from above Bishop Pass is one of those views that needs to be seen over and over again. As I was bundling up, my quiet lunch was interrupted by what appeared to be a Search and Rescue helicopter searching the area of the Palisades, and then suddenly flew right over my head. Hope they found who they were looking for.

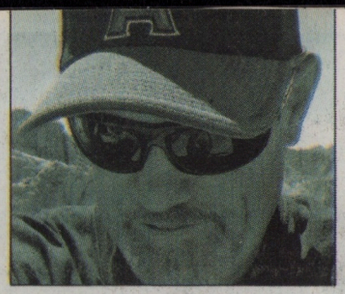
After three hours of playing at Bishop Pass, it was time to start back down the trail. A stop at Bishop Lake to lay down on some nice grass and rest, was the perfect ending to another great hike.

(Craig Jackson is a Bishop resident and avid hiker/backpacker who enjoys exploring his new backyard after having relocated here in 2013 from Southern California. Email him at Sierracj51@gmail.com.)

Bishop Creek Canyon, and the great trails that take me up to the High Country to see pristine lakes and jagged peaks. With three forks to choose from, it is absolutely impossible to not have a great time hiking in Bishop Creek Canyon. The south fork has classic hikes to Bishop Pass, Treasure Lakes, Chocolate Lakes and Green Lake; while the north fork provides opportunities to see such sights as the Piute Crags, Loch Leven Lakes, Piute Pass and the Lamarck Lakes. Recent trips have taken me to Bishop Pass, and all of the lakes along the way, as well as Piute Pass, Muriel Lake and Green Lake (it's been a busy summer).

Last week it was the Middle Fork Bishop Creek Canyon that would see my boot prints on a great hike to Hungry Packer Lake out of Lake Sabrina. The Sabrina Basin is different from the other two forks in that its maintained trail does not cross the Sierra Crest and join up with the John Muir and Pacific Crest Trails. Like the other trails in the area, the Sabrina Basin Trail is a typical Eastern Sierra route, steep to very steep portions here and there with spectacular scenery each and every step of the way.

The plan for the day was to get an early start and hike up to Blue Lake, at 3 miles from the trailhead, then proceed up the canyon 3.5 more miles to Hungry Packer Lake, directly beneath 13,120 foot Picture Peak and the Sierra Crest. The total elevation gain for the entire 13-plus mile hike was roughly 2,700 feet, making this a moderate to strenuous (mileage) adventure.



CRAIG JACKSON
COLUMNIST

I was really looking forward to this hike and had a hard time sleeping the night before, but that wasn't a deterrent, as I was out the door at a quarter to six and pulling into the first hiker parking spot at Lake Sabrina at six thirty a.m. Within a few minutes the hike began next to the Sabrina Basin trailhead sign on an old road heading in an uphill direction. Quickly the road turns to trail, and after a mile of hiking the sun began to light up the peaks to the west but had yet to find the surface of Lake Sabrina.

I passed the turnoff to George Lake at the 1.3 mile mark then easily crossed its outlet before beginning a stretch of steep switchbacks to the top of the ridge. The view down to Lake Sabrina, and across the canyon to Mount Emerson and the red-orange Piute Crags, is outstanding from this spot. There are plenty of granite steps along the next stretch, then the trail climbs up a ravine on more perfectly engineered switchbacks, eventually to the shore of appropriately named Blue Lake, 3 miles in. Without hesitation I crossed Blue Lake's outlet on a piled-log type bridge leading to some level hiking for a short time.

Beyond Blue Lake the trail splits, going straight to Donkey and Baboon Lakes, while I turned right to Dingleberry Lake, Midnight Lake and Hungry Packer Lake. The next mile and a half had a steady moderate uphill, as well as a granite path marked with large rocks, before descending a hundred feet to the shore of medium-size Dingleberry Lake. Some more up and down walking took me to the one and only crossing of Middle Fork Bishop Creek, which consists of 20 large rocks strategically placed in a crooked line to the other side. It was no problem crossing as the water level in the high country seems to be back to normal for this time of year.

At the 5 mile mark I turned left at the signed junction to Hungry Packer Lake and immediately crossed Midnight Lake's boisterous outlet, hiking next to an open area decorated with late summer colorful flowers. From here it's a mile and a half of some fantastic hiking on undulating terrain, with cascades and waterfalls, and of course the ultra-impressive Sierra Crest straight ahead. It was 10:10 a.m. when I made my final step to the shore of picturesque Hungry Packer Lake, and realized my t-shirt and shorts were not enough, because it was cold!

With 13,120 foot Picture Peak and 13,377 foot Mount Wallace as a backdrop, the view from Hungry Packer Lake is unequivocally one of the nicest in the entire Sierra Nevada range. I stayed for a couple of hours, watching a couple of guys fishing, but really just staring at the incredible beauty of nature right in front of my face. Shortly thereafter I was heading back down the trail, stopping first at Drunken Sailor Lake for a nap, emerging with a new found spring in my step and a noisy hunger in my stomach. It was a perfect day in Sabrina Basin, capped off with a great burger and fries from the quaintly wonderful café at the Lake Sabrina Boat Landing, overlooking Lake Sabrina and the Sierra Crest.

(Craig Jackson is a Bishop resident and avid hiker/backpacker who enjoys exploring his new backyard after having relocated here in 2013 from Southern California. Email him at Sierracj51@gmail.com.)

The outlet of Hungry Packer Lake with the Sierra Crest looming above it.

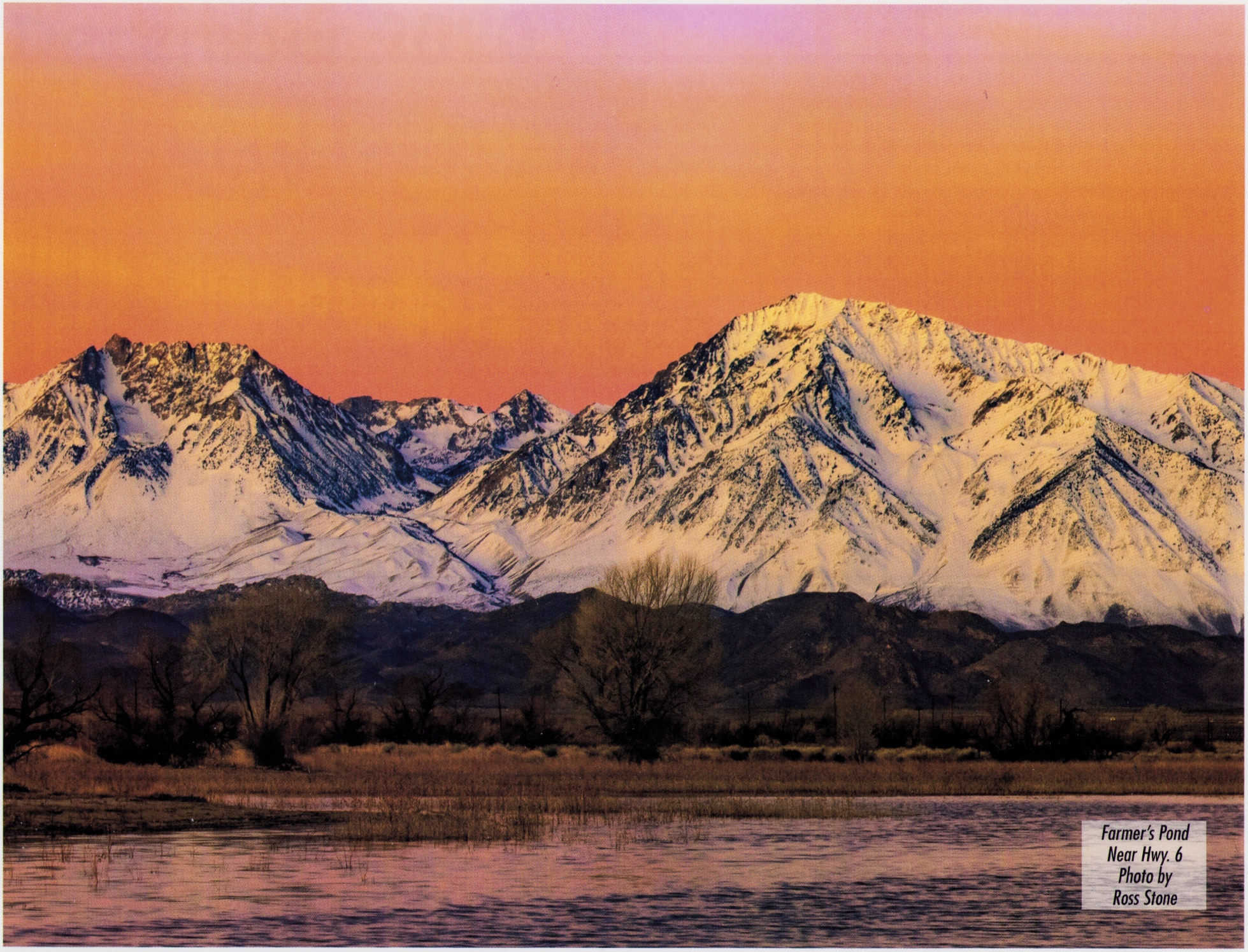
Photo by Craig

9-16-2017

Storm Clouds over basin
Mountain and Horton Creek

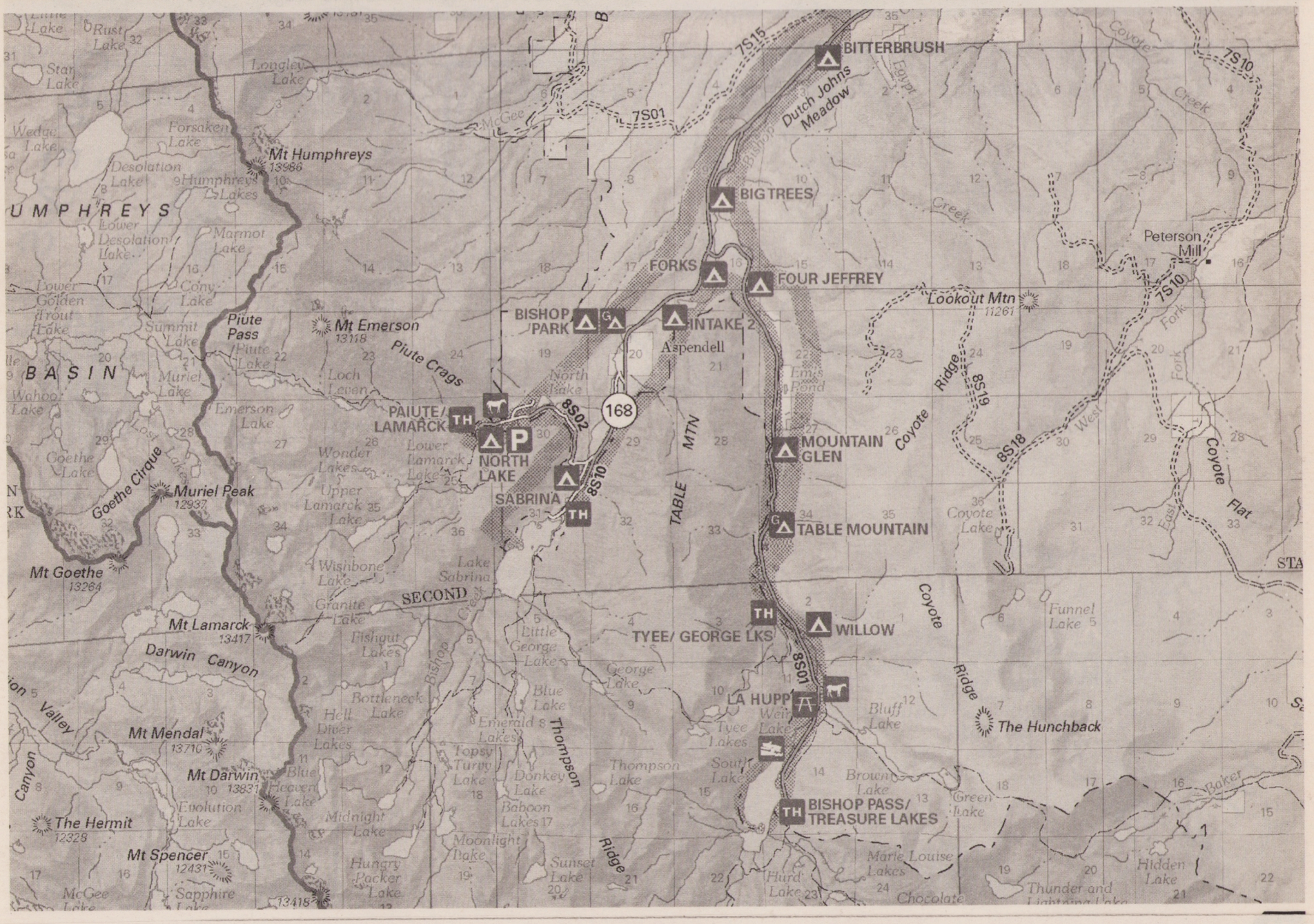
Frozen Farmers Pond
Photo by Dennis Jahn

Summer Reflection
Farmer's Pond
Photo by
Jerome Winstead

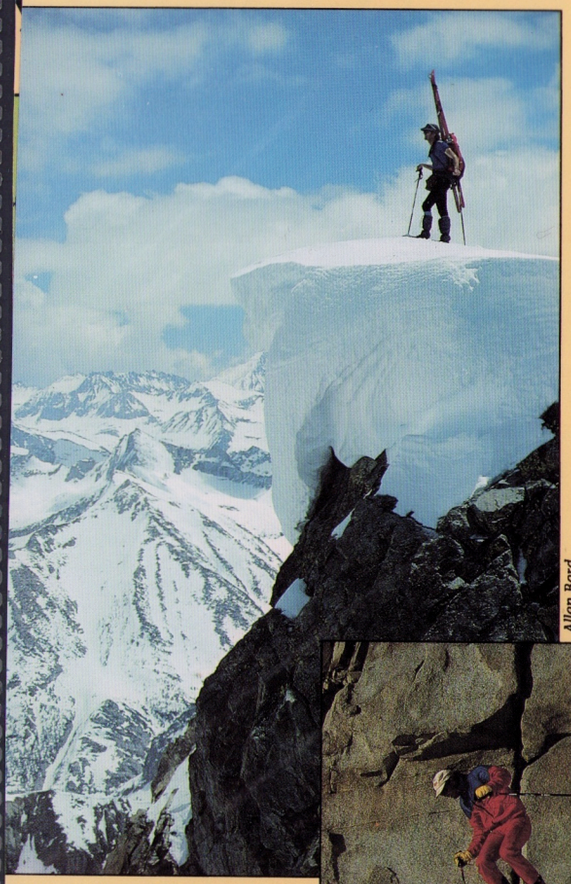


Farmer's Pond
Near Hwy. 6
Photo by
Ross Stone

Farmers Pond

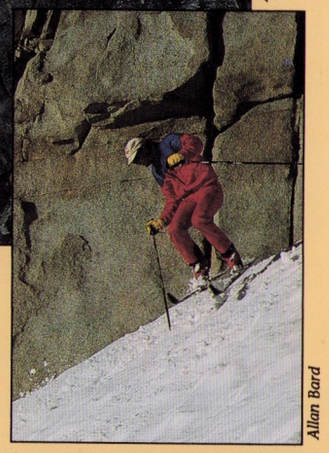

BITTERBRUSH
Dutch Johns Meadow
7S15
7S01
7S10
BIG TREES
FORKS
FOUR JEFFREY
Peterson Mill
Lookout Mtn
11261
BISHOP PARK
INTAKE 2
Aspendell
Mt Humphreys
13986
Mt Emerson
13118
Piute Pass
Piute Crags
PAIUTE/ LAMARCK
NORTH LAKE
SABRINA
8S02
8S10
168
TABLE MTN
MOUNTAIN GLEN
TABLE MOUNTAIN
8S19
8S18
Coyote Ridge
Coyote Flat
Muriel Peak
12937
Goethe Cirque
Mt Goethe
13264
SECOND
Mt Lamarck
13417
Darwin Canyon
TYEE/ GEORGE LKS
WILLOW
LA HUPP
8S01
The Hunchback
Mt Mendal
13710
Mt Darwin
13831
The Hermit
12328
Mt Spencer
12431
BISHOP PASS/ TREASURE LAKES
Thompson Ridge
Baker
Chocolate
Hidden Lake
Funnel Lake
Coyote Lake
Marie Louise Lakes
Thunder and Lightning Lakes
Green Lake
Brown Lake
Bluff Lake
Tyee Lakes
South Lake
Weir Lake
Little George Lake
George Lake
Blue Lake
Emerald Lakes
Topsy Turvy Lake
Donkey Lake
Baboon Lakes
Thompson Lake
Moonlight Lake
Sunset Lake
Hurd Lake
Hungry Packer Lake
Midnight Lake
Evolution Lake
Blue Heaven Lake
Hell Diver Lakes
Bottleneck Lake
Fishgut Lakes
Granite Lake
Wishbone Lake
Lake Sabrina
Upper Lamarck Lake
Lower Lamarck Lake
Wonder Lakes
Loch Leven
Emerson Lake
Muriel Lake
Piute Lake
Summit Lake
Cony Lake
Marmot Lake
Lower Desolation Lake
Desolation Lake
Humphreys Lakes
Forsaken Lake
Wedge Lake
Longley Lake
Rust Lake
Star Lake
Lost Lake
Goethe Lake
Wahoo Lake
Lower Golden Trout Lake
Sapphire Lake
McGee Lake
Valley
Canyon
Ridge
Creek
Fork
West
East
Bishop
McGee
Egypt
Coyote
STA

Bishop Area



Allan Bard

A ski mountaineer views the west side of the spectacular Sierra Crest.



Allan Bard

A skier takes off down Wahoo Gully in the Bishop skyline area. ▶

Gordon Wiltsie

Donald Fonner

Elegant and functional artifacts of Native Americans on display at the Eastern California Museum in Independence.

Donald Fonner

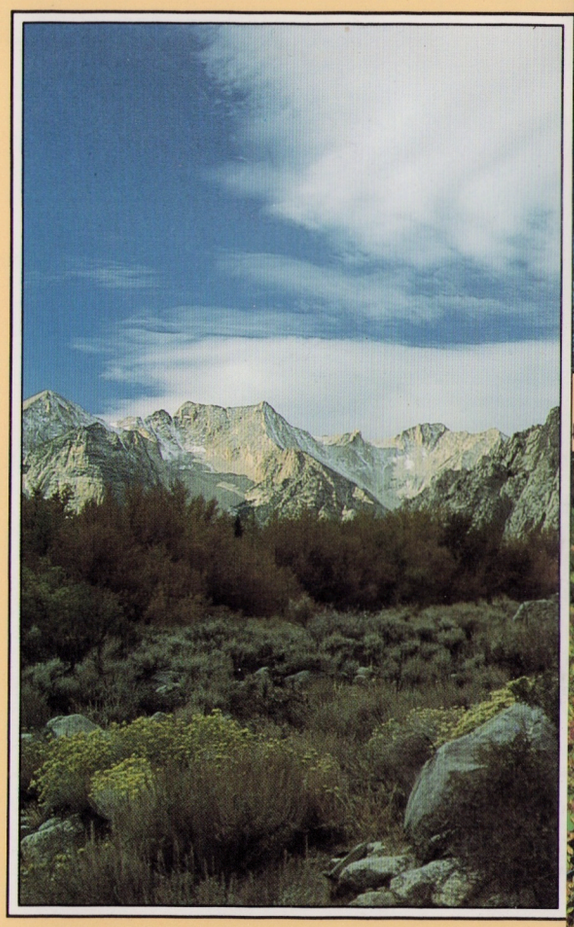
Pioneer ghost town at the Eastern California Museum.

Mark Allison

The unique history of the railroad in the Owens Valley can be found at the Laws Railroad Museum & National Historic Site at Laws, just north of Bishop.

design/production by

INYO COUNTY



Adventure Capitol of the World !

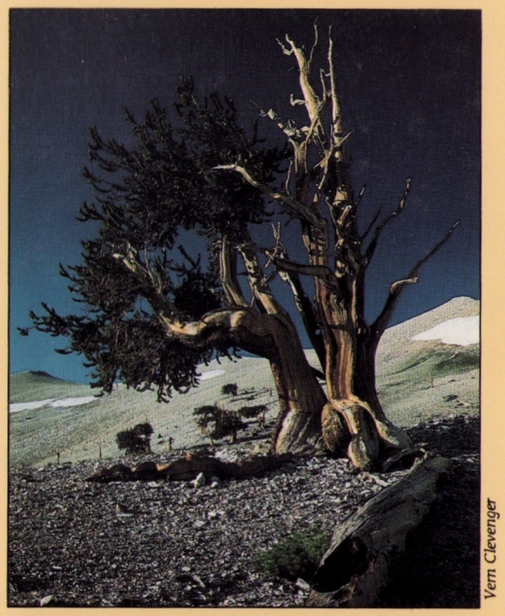
Welcome to the adventure capitol of the world! Inyo County is a land of magnificent natural diversity. It has Mount Whitney, the highest peak in the lower 48 states, Death Valley, the lowest point in the U.S., and the Great Basin bristlecone pines, the oldest life forms in the world. Beyond this, experts agree that we have the best alpine climbing, spring back-country skiing, hang gliding, horsepacking and mountain biking to be found anywhere in the world!

Inyo County offers a full spectrum of adventure and involvement from the absolute stillness and peace of the desert, through the meadows blanketed with wildflowers, over the rushing mountain streams of the forest, to the wind-whipped granite peaks. There is nowhere you can turn without seeing Nature's striking beauty. You can experience this unforgettable grandeur from the comfort of your car, on foot, on horseback, on dacron wings, or on fingertips, toes and sheer nerve!

Born of fire and ice, the granite peaks of the High Sierra have been sculpted by glaciers, wind and weather into some of Nature's most glorious works of art. Protected early on, thanks to John Muir and other pioneer conservationists, the John Muir Wilderness has remained virtually unchanged for thousands of years. Our county is dotted with historic towns providing professional services and the equipment you'll need for your excursion, whether it's backpacking, fishing, horsepacking, skiing, climbing, biking, soaring, photography or just sightseeing.

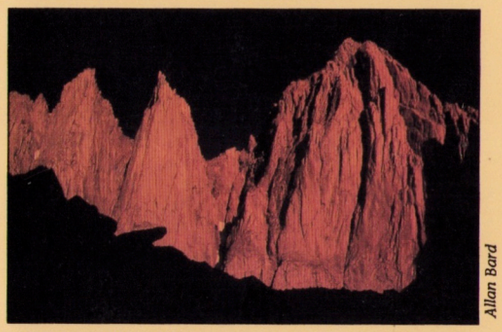
◄ Pine Creek Canyon. *Mark Allison*

Dennis Brackett



Vern Clevenger

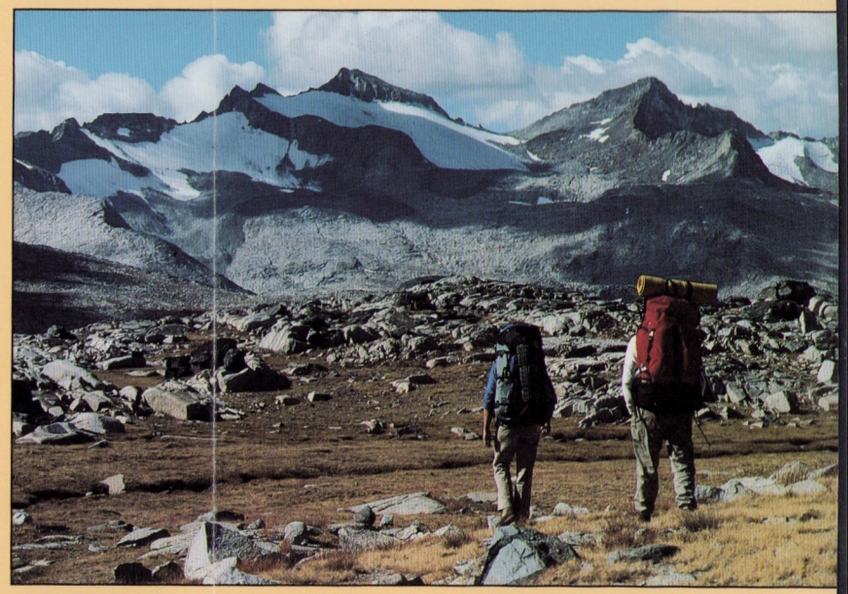
Great Basin bristlecone pine in the White Mountains.



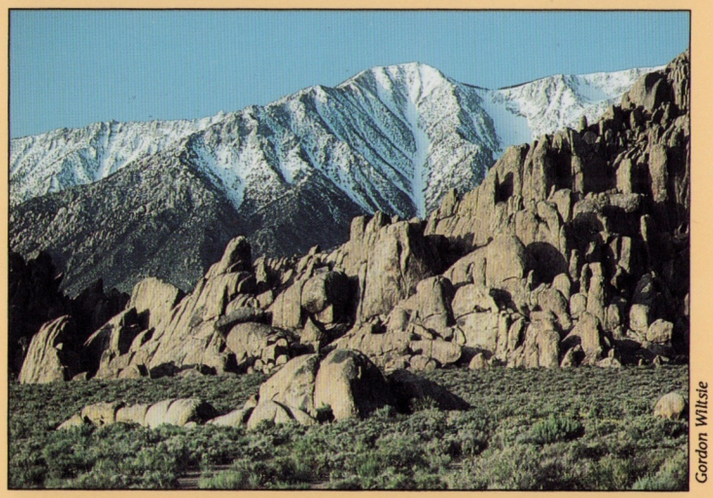
Allan Bard

East face of Mount Whitney, near Lone Pine.

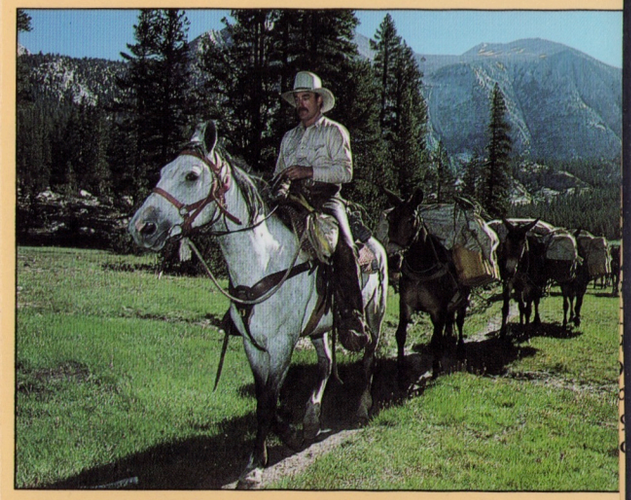
Tecopa, east of Death Valley, is popular for its hot springs.



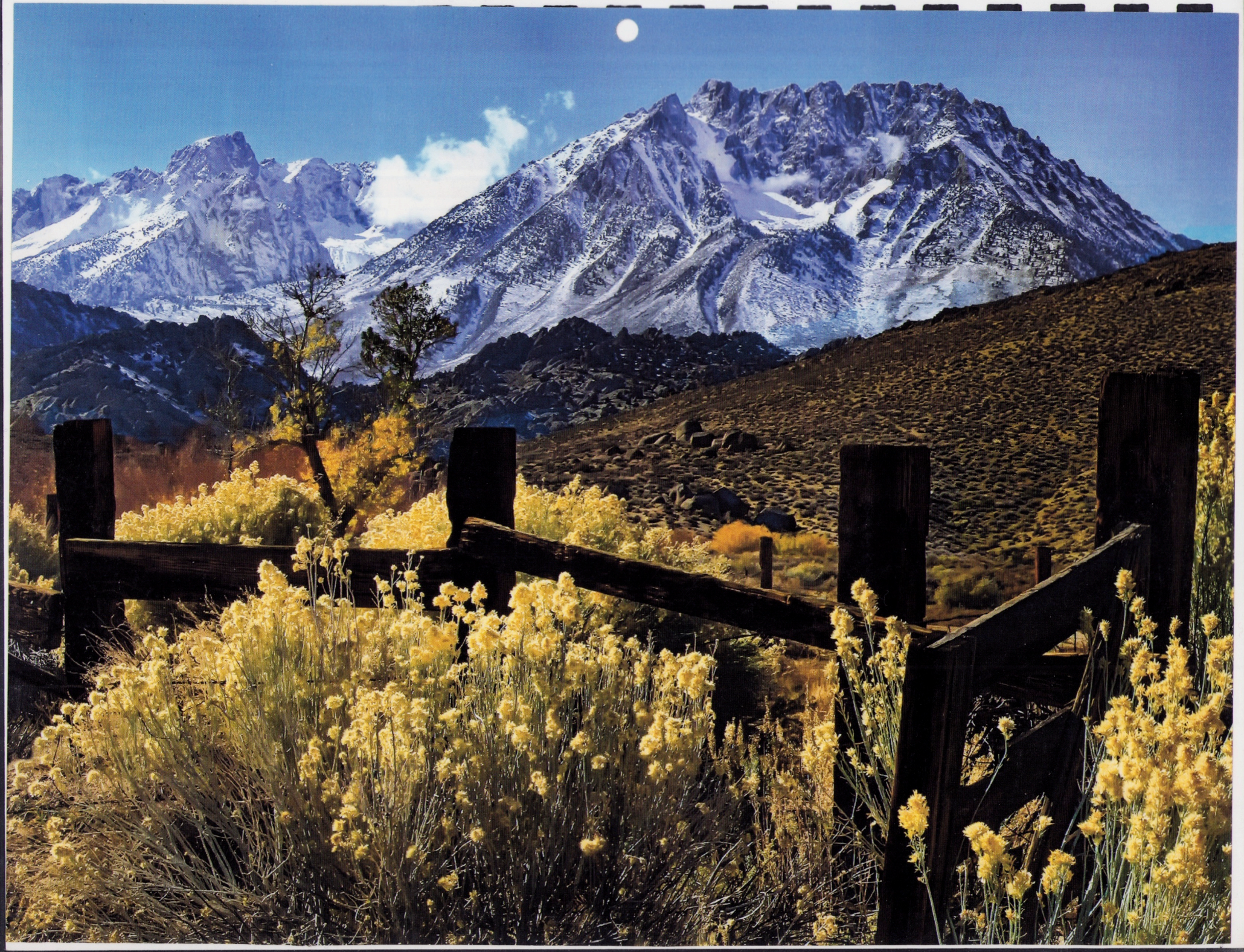
Backpacking above the timberline.



Gordon Wiltsie



Horsepacking in Pine Creek Canyon, John Muir Wilderness



Wildflowers on Coyote Flats West of Big Pine

Howard Walker
2012

Fall in Bishop Canyon

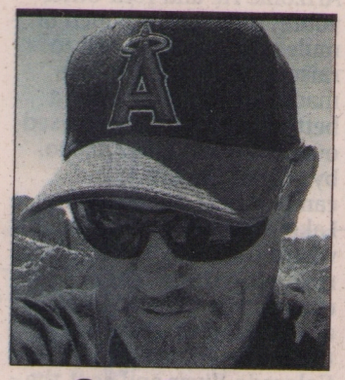
Howard Walker

Sierra Sojourns

A short hike to Shangri-La

A three-mile hike leads to spectacular Lower Lamarck Lake.

Photo by Craig Jackson



CRAIG JACKSON
COLUMNIST

Daydreaming and thinking occur frequently while hiking the trails of the Sierra Nevada, enhancing the brain while also clearing the mind of negative thoughts. My mind is no different as it jumps from subject to subject but then slows down to take in the incredible views before me, trying to retain them in my memory bank. Different places remind me of different things while some places look almost surreal, decorated in lakes and waterfalls. One of these idealistic spots is only three miles from a popular campground west of Bishop with a steep ascent that will take your breath away.

North Lake Campground is the trailhead for the popular trans-Sierra Piute Pass Trail, attracting thousands of backpackers heading for the John Muir or Pacific Crest Trails. A little known trail begins at the same trailhead and reaches the breathtaking Lamarck Lakes in three steep rocky miles. Lower Lamarck Lake always reminds me of a scene from Jurassic Park or King Kong, minus the dinosaurs and hairy ape.

The trailhead is at North Lake Campground, a half mile from North Lake in Bishop Creek Canyon at 9,250 feet above sea level. If not camping in the campground, hikers must park a half mile down the road next to the pack station. I arrived a little later then usual, pulling into the parking area a few minutes before noon, lucky to get a parking spot.

Unlike the week before on a cold hike to White Mountain Peak, the weather was perfect with a nice cool breeze. The walk from the parking lot to the trailhead was uneventful as usual, taking no time to pass the campground and jump on the shady trail. Within moments the trail crossed over North Fork Bishop Creek in an aspen and lodgepole pine forest, then started moderate switchbacks uphill. At 1.3 miles the steep ascent turns to level ground at a 9,900 foot saddle full of beautiful limber pines. I stopped here for a brief second to drink some water and listen to the wind.

This was approximately my 10th time on this trail and I knew the hardest part of the hike was now upon me. I passed the turnoff for Grass Lake and looked up at the ridge I was heading for, 700 feet higher in three quarters of a mile. The zigzagging switchbacks climbed over rocks steeply, taking my breath away momentarily.

In a short 2.6 miles I arrived at the surreal-like shoreline of Lower Lamarck Lake. With majestic peaks in the foreground and background, as well as a big blue lake sparsely scattered with large pine trees, this lake has everything "Shangri-La" should have. I stared intensely up the side canyon to the Wonder Lakes before bouncing back on the trail toward Upper Lamarck Lake. It's only a half mile and 200 feet higher than Lower Lamarck, but Upper Lamarck Lake has an entirely different appearance.

The maintained trail basically ends at Upper Lamarck's outlet (another unmaintained trail goes up and over Lamarck Col) in a pinched-off fashion with a rocky shore to the left and some tall granite to the right. This time I chose to climb the granite to an incredible vantage point, being able to see the entire lake and a great shot of 13,417 Mount Lamarck, rising above everything else. I noticed below two fishermen trying their luck but seeming not to have any.

Luckily for me I found the perfect lounging rock with the best view, then plopped my tired body down and dozed off for a minute. Down below I heard a scream and saw one of the fishermen land a fish but neglect to set the hook so it went free. Silence returned and my lounging continued for quite some time, listening to the sounds of nature while a squirrel was foraging for winter food atop a pine tree a few feet away.

I spent a short two hours in this spot watching hikers go to and from Lamarck Col high up on the ridge above, deciding to head back as clouds began to approach. On the way back I stopped at Grass Lake and watched a couple of fly fishermen enjoying themselves at the grassy lake, before leisurely strolling back to my car.

(Craig Jackson is a Bishop resident and avid hiker/backpacker who enjoys exploring his new backyard after having relocated here in 2013 from Southern California. Email him at Sierracj51@gmail.com.)

Hiking Trails in the Bishop Area

The Granite Precipice known as the Sierra Crest is popular with climbers and mountaineers yet holds hidden treasures for the hiker as well. The trails in the Bishop area all begin at a relatively high elevation thereby affording the day hiker easy access to this grand and mighty escarpment.

Nestled at the base of the many high peaks are numerous lakes where the elusive Golden Trout can be found. In fact, The Golden Trout found here in the mountains near Bishop could be the biggest anywhere in the range. The variety of lakes and streams makes it impossible to tell you exactly where to go but this page will help you get started on an adventure of your own.

Besides the opportunity to fish, There are also many other options available. Nearby peaks offer climbing routes of various degrees ranging from steep hiking to the overhanging sport climb s favored by the younger set.

The opportunity to capture the picture of a lifetime can happen anywhere in this scenic wonderland.

No matter what you chose to do in this glorious setting you will certainly be rewarded with a memory not soon forgotten!!!

The Bishop Pass Trail
6 miles
trailhead elevation (South Lake) -- 9,800'
finish elevation (Bishop Pass) -- 11,980'
gain -- 2,180' (363' per mile)
topo map of the trail
topo map of the area

This is the most popular trail in the area and after hiking here you will know why. Starting at the highest trailhead in the Bishop area this trail wanders amongst wildly serrated cliffs and polished glacial valleys. Excellent campsites can be found everywhere. At the outlet area of Long Lake is a spring with some refreshingly pure water. Can you find it?

The Treasure Lakes Trail
3 miles
trailhead elevation (South Lake) -- 9,800'
finish elevation (Main Treasure Lake) -- 10,650'
gain -- 850' (283' per mile)
topo map of the trail
topo map of the area

This is an easy hike with BIG rewards. The visitor will be impressed with both the scenery and the quality of the fishing. Only 3 miles from the road this area is popular as well. With a little adventuring many off trail lakes in the Treasure Lake Basin can be found. Campsites abound in this area and this is a great beginner hike. Access to the summit of nearby Mt. Gilbert is from the upper Treasure Lakes basin.

Sabrina Basin Trail
7 miles
trailhead elevation (Sabrina Lake) -- 9,125'
Finish elevation (Hungry Packer Lake) -- 11,070'
gain -- 1,945' (278' per mile)

This is perhaps the ultimate Sierra setting. Jagged spires of pure granite form a scenic backdrop to the numerous high alpine lakes. Many of the lakes have Golden Trout, the California state fish. Mt Darwin dominates the region and with no easy way up, it is prized by many mountaineers. Bighorn sheep can occaisionally be spotted high above the valley floor. There are many lakes and campsites to choose from with little distance separating them.

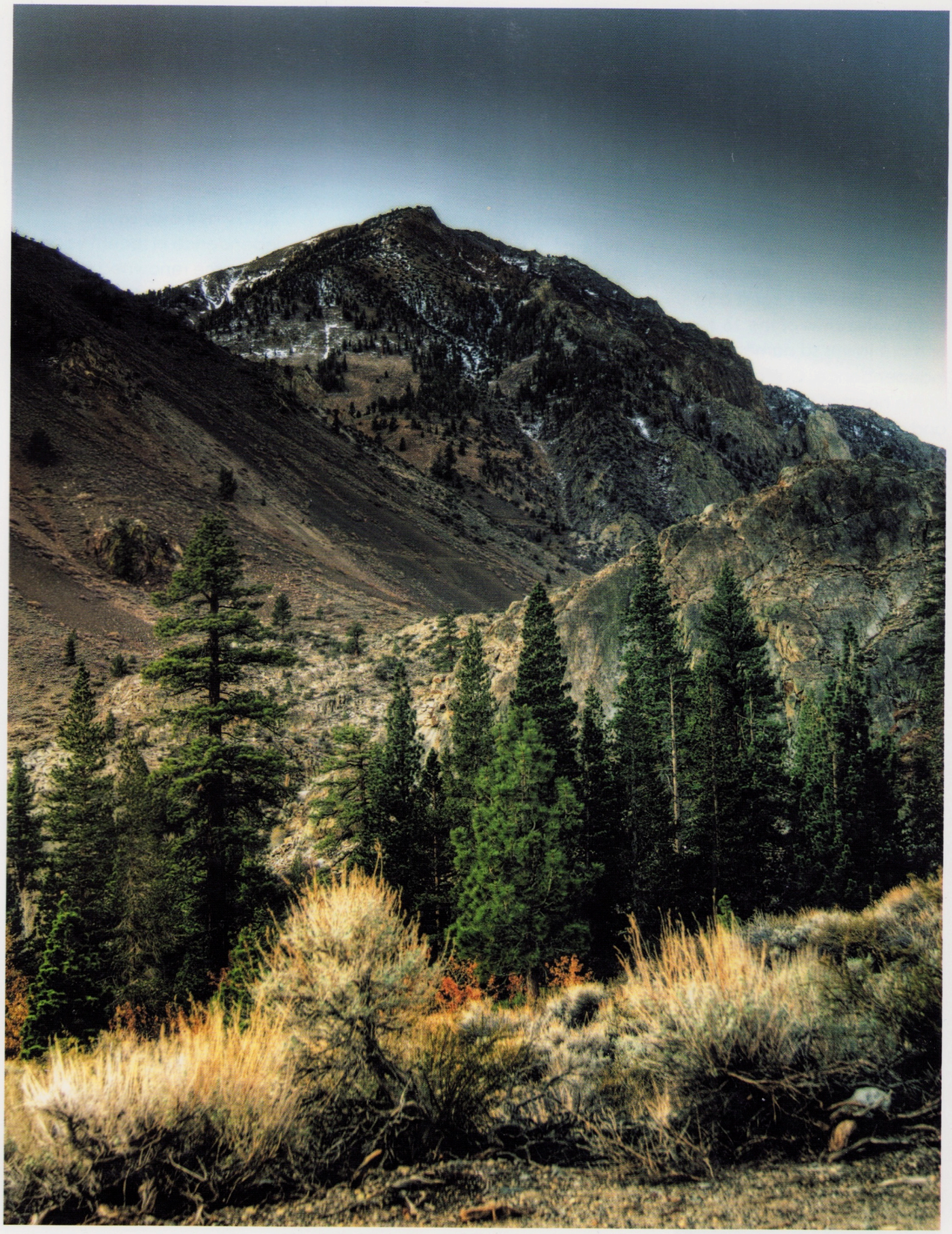
Lamarck Col Trail
7 miles
trailhead elevation -- 9,300'
Finish elevation -- 12,880'
gain -- 3,580' (511' per mile)

This is considered an off trail route but there is a great path which detracts from the off-trail experience. The path goes left just before Upper Lamarck Lake and crosses the creek which flows down into Grass Lake. From here it ascends a steep open slope and crosses into a hanging valley on the way to the wide, sandy valley beyond. At this point continue up valley until the saddle (Lamarck Col) is encountered. Go through any of the notches to Darwin Canyon or go right to the summit of Mt. Lamarck

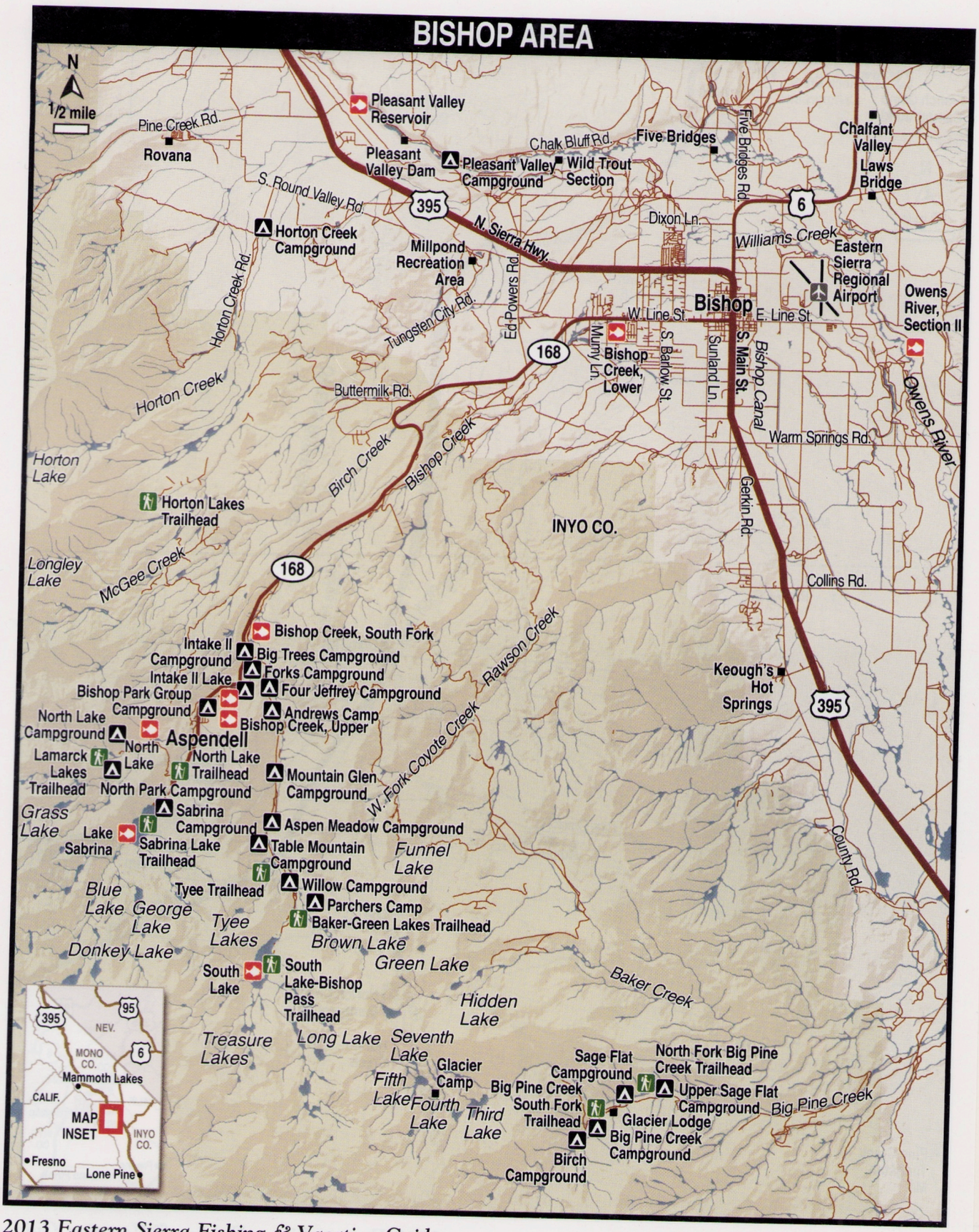
Piute Pass Trail
5 miles
trailhead elevation -- 9,300'
Finish elevation -- 11,420'
gain -- 2,120' (424' per mile)

This is the trail to the heartland of Golden Trout country. Access to Humphreys Basin and the west side of the Sierra. Cascading rivers and giant cliffs fill the desolate canyons of this region. The Humphreys Basin is a barren landscape with superb views and some of the biggest Golden Trout you can imagine. Not to spoil the fun, you will have to search the many lakes on your own. No tips here except, the fish like the talus for cover.

North Lake - Bishop



Northfork of Bishop Creek Recreation Area


BISHOP AREA
N
1/2 mile
Pine Creek Rd.
Rovana
Pleasant Valley Reservoir
Pleasant Valley Dam
Pleasant Valley Campground
Chalk Bluff Rd.
Wild Trout Section
Five Bridges
Five Bridges Rd.
Chalfant Valley
Laws Bridge
S. Round Valley Rd.
395
N. Sierra Hwy.
6
Dixon Ln.
Horton Creek Campground
Millpond Recreation Area
Williams Creek
Eastern Sierra Regional Airport
Owens River, Section II
Horton Creek Rd.
Tungsten City Rd.
Ed Powers Rd.
Bishop
W. Line St.
E. Line St.
168
Mumy Ln.
Bishop Creek, Lower
S. Barlow St.
Sunland Ln.
S. Main St.
Bishop Canal
Owens River
Horton Creek
Buttermilk Rd.
Warm Springs Rd.
Horton Lake
Birch Creek
Bishop Creek
Horton Lakes Trailhead
INYO CO.
Gerkin Rd.
Longley Lake
McGee Creek
168
Collins Rd.
Bishop Creek, South Fork
Intake II Campground
Big Trees Campground
Intake II Lake
Forks Campground
Rawson Creek
Keough's Hot Springs
Bishop Park Group Campground
Four Jeffrey Campground
Andrews Camp
Bishop Creek, Upper
North Lake Campground
North Lake
Aspendell
Lamarck Lakes Trailhead
North Lake Trailhead
North Park Campground
Mountain Glen Campground
W. Fork Coyote Creek
395
Grass Lake
Sabrina Campground
Aspen Meadow Campground
Lake Sabrina
Sabrina Lake Trailhead
Table Mountain Campground
Funnel Lake
County Rd.
Blue Lake
Tyee Trailhead
Willow Campground
George Lake
Parchers Camp
Tyee Lakes
Baker-Green Lakes Trailhead
Brown Lake
Donkey Lake
Green Lake
South Lake
South Lake-Bishop Pass Trailhead
Baker Creek
Hidden Lake
Treasure Lakes
Long Lake
Seventh Lake
Glacier Camp
Sage Flat Campground
North Fork Big Pine Creek Trailhead
Fifth Lake
Fourth Lake
Third Lake
Big Pine Creek
South Fork Trailhead
Upper Sage Flat Campground
Big Pine Creek
Glacier Lodge
Big Pine Creek Campground
Birch Campground
395
95
NEV.
MONO CO.
6
Mammoth Lakes
CALIF.
MAP INSET
INYO CO.
Fresno
Lone Pine

Wilderness Hiking

Bishop Creek • South Fork

INYO National Forest

TRAILHEAD LOCATION

From Hwy. 395 in Bishop, turn west on Line St. (Hwy.168 west) and continue approx. 23 mi. to South Lake. Day use and overnight parking is located at the roads end. (9,760')

Trails begining at South Lake lead to Green Lk., Treasure Lks., Chocolate Lks., and Bishop Pass. Fishing enthusiasts enjoy the many lakes available within a few miles of the trailhead.

BROWN • GREEN LAKES

The **Green Lake** trail begins at the east end of the parking lot and follows a stock trail upward through a conifer forest where it joins with the main trail on up to Green Lake. The trail levels off into a lush mountain meadow below **Brown Lake**. Above this lake the trail moves upward along a bench where Green Lake lies amidst gnarled, old Whitebark Pines. Rainbow Trout are found in these lakes.

BISHOP PASS

The **Bishop Pass** trail begins at the south end of the parking lot. It ascends along the east side of South Lake, through a forest of Aspen Trees and Lodgepole Pines. Majestic views of Hurd Pk., Mt. Thompson, and Mt. Goode, can be seen from the trail.

The **Treasure Lakes** trail branches off from the Bishop Pass trail. The lakes are located in a beautiful granite basin surrounded by high Sierrra peaks. Fishing is good with Rainbow, Brown, and Golden Trout.

The **Chocolate Lakes** trail branches off the main trail below **Long Lake**. This trail is less maintained and will take hikers to **Bull and Chocolate Lakes**. These are along the base of the jagged Inconsolable Range. If one continues on this obscure path it will rejoin the Bishop Pass trail near **Ruwau Lake**. This loop offers interesting geology and good fishing.

The **Bishop Pass** trail gives great opportunities to observe many effects of glacier activity such as glacial cirques, glaciated granite, and glacier "erratics" (large boulders). Also evident are the effects of elevations on plant life, as Whitebark Pine replaces Lodgepole and disappears above timberline where only a few herbaceous annuals are seen. Beyond Bishop Pass, the trail drops into **Dusy Basin** and further down into **Kings Canyon National Park**, where it then joins the **John Muir Trail**.

Dogs are **NOT** allowed in the National Park backcountry and must be kept on a leash or at heel under verbal control outside of park boundaries. **Guns** also are **NOT** allowed in the National Park.

TRAILHEAD LOCATION

The trailhead for **Tyee Lakes** is located 4.4 miles up the South Lake road and begins at the footbridge that crosses Bishop Creek.

TYEE LAKES

The **Tyee Lakes** trail, named for a famed brand of salmon eggs, although steep with many switchbacks, offers good fishing (Rainbow and Brown Trout) and highly scenic qualities. The trail becomes a bit indistinct over Table Mtn., before it drops down to **George Lake** and **Lake Sabrina**. View of Mt. Thompson, Mt. Aggisiz, Mt. Gilbert and the Inconsolable Range, can be seen from Table Mtn.

Weather conditions change rapidly in the Sierra Nevada. Hikers should carry ample clothing for the anticipated changes. It is recommended that all hikers boil water for 3 - 5 min. or use a filtering system before drinking, due to the presence of giardia in most of the water.

Remember that stock have the right of way on all trails. Stand quietly off trail until all stock have passed to avoid spooking the animals.

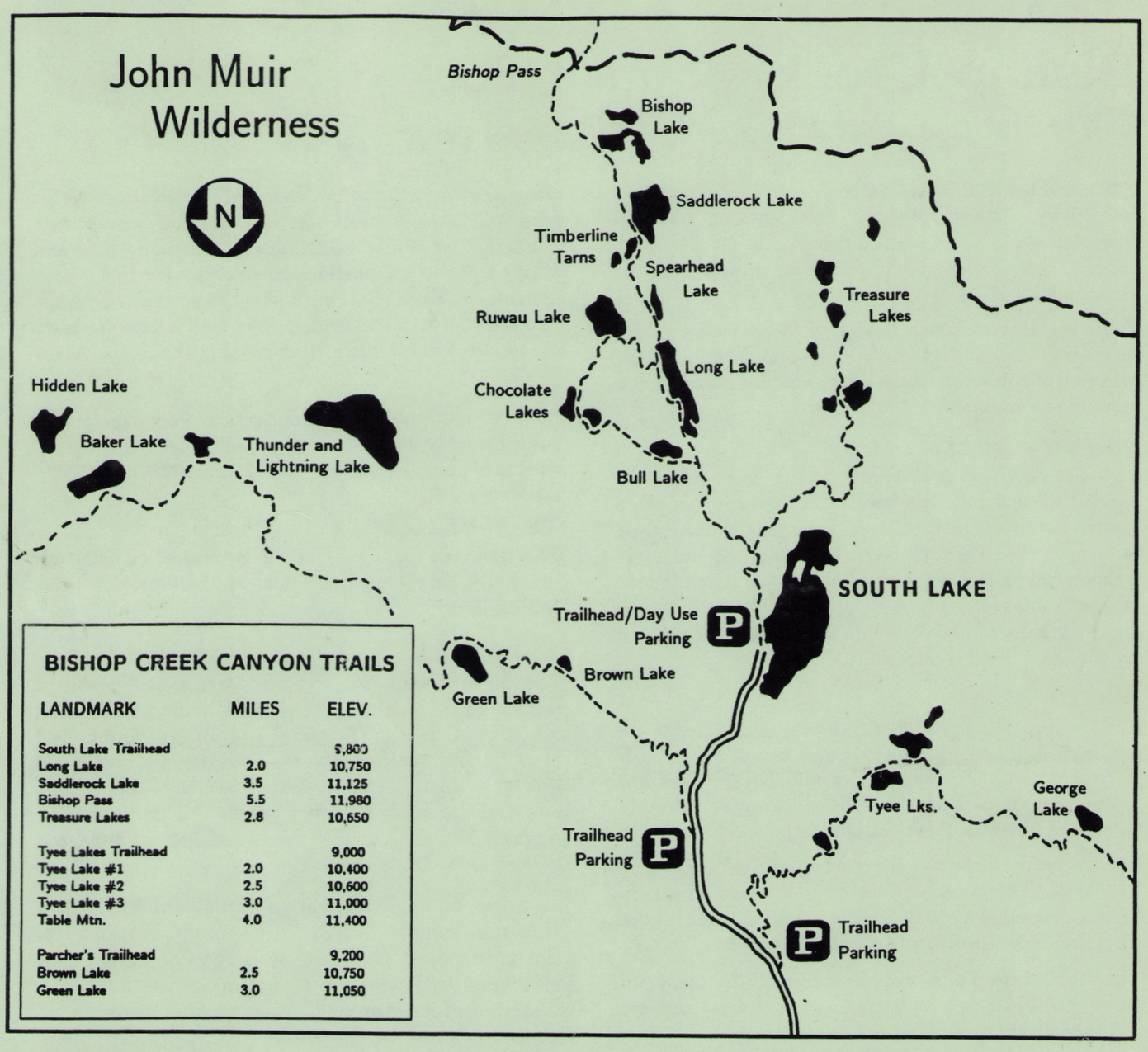
PLEASE be sure to carry out all empty bait containers and trash while hiking or fishing.

United States Department of Agriculture

Forest Service

White Mtn. Ranger District

Bishop Creek Canyon • South Fork



BISHOP CREEK CANYON TRAILS

LANDMARK	MILES	ELEV.
South Lake Trailhead		9,800
Long Lake	2.0	10,750
Saddlerock Lake	3.5	11,125
Bishop Pass	5.5	11,980
Treasure Lakes	2.8	10,650
Tyee Lakes Trailhead		9,000
Tyee Lake #1	2.0	10,400
Tyee Lake #2	2.5	10,600
Tyee Lake #3	3.0	11,000
Table Mtn.	4.0	11,400
Parcher's Trailhead		9,200
Brown Lake	2.5	10,750
Green Lake	3.0	11,050

GUIDEBOOKS

High Sierra Hiking Guide - Mt. Goddard - by John Robinson & Andy Selters - Wilderness Press
Sierra Nevada Natural History - by Tracy Storer & Robert Usinger - University of Calif. Press
Best Short Hikes in California, South Sierra - by Karen & Terry Whitehill - The Mountaineers

MAPS

USFS - John Muir Wilderness Map - Topo
USGS - Mt. Goddard - 15min. quad.- Topo
- **Mt. Thompson** - 7.5 min. quad. - Topo
- **No. Palisade** - 7.5 min. quad. - Topo

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(rev.2/93)

Trails (South)
White Mountain District

INYO National Forest

The Chart lists basic information for most trails on the southern end of the White Mountain Ranger District. On the reverse side, is found additional information on these trails.

Weather conditions are changeable. Be sure you have the proper clothing and equipment.

Many of the LOOP trails travel through the Inyo National Forest and enter Kings Canyon National Park or Sierra National Forest. The information presented here is for the Inyo only. Trails that enter other jurisdictions will be noted on the reverse.

Trail	Length Miles	Trailhead Elevation	Highest Elevation	Easier	More Difficult	Loop Possible	One Way	Heavy Use	Quota (6/15-9/15)	Wilderness Permit Required
Piute Pass	5.0*	9,300	11,420*	X		X		X	X	X
Lamarck Lakes	6.0*	9,300	12,900*		X	X			X	X
Sabrina Basin	11.0	9,130	11,100		X		X	X	X	X
Tyee/George Lakes	7.9	9,000 9,130	11,509,		X	X			X	X
Bishop Pass	5.5*	9,750	11,980*		X	X		X	X	X
Treasure Lake	3.0	9,750	11,200		X		X		X	X
Green/Baker Lakes	12.9	9,300 7,760	11,800		X	X				See Back
N.F. Big Pine	8.1	7,760	11,200		X		X	X	X	X
S.F. Big Pine	5.0	7.880	10,250		X		X		X	X
Birch Lake	7.0	6,300	10,800		X		X			X
Red Lake	5.5	6,500	10,500		X		X			X
Taboose Creek	7.3*	5,400	11,000*		X	X			X	X

* Mileage is to boundary of another jurisdiction. Elevation is highest point on Inyo National Forest

United States Department of Agriculture

Forest Service

White Mountain Ranger District

PIUTE PASS - Trailhead near pack station at North lake. Elevation and mileage to Piute Pass. A heavily used trail most often used for access to Humphrey Basin on the Sierra National Forest and to the Pacific Crest Trail.

LAMARCK LAKES - Trailhead as for Piute Pass. Elevation and mileage to Lamarck Col. Only the most experienced should attampt going over Lamarck Col into Kings Canyon National Park. A less demanding hike can be made to the lakes and return.

SABRINA BASIN - Trailhead parking at the junction of Sabrina and North Lake Roads. Trail starts 1/2 mile up Sabrina Lake Road. Elevation and mileages are to Hungry Packer Lake. However, there are trails to various other Lakes, and for the adventuresome and experienced, cross country travel will lead to many other lakes. Trails are heavily used.

TYEE/GEORGE LAKE - Loop trip possible - 1st elevation is trailhead to Tyee Lakes. It begins on the road to South Lake. Trail (faint in places) continues past the lakes and continues out to the Sabrina Basin Trail, then out to this trailhead (the second elevation). Lightly used beyond Tyee Lakes. Excellent opportunities for solitude.

BISHOP PASS - Trailhead at end of South Lake Road. elevations and mileages are to Bishop Pass, a main portal into Kings Canyon National Park. Remember, dogs and firearms are not allowed in the National Park. A heavily used trail, popular as a loop from Piute Pass.

TREASURE LAKE - Trailhead as for Bishop Pass. The trail to Treasure Lake branches from the Bishop Pass Trail, about 3/4 mile from trailhead. The Treasure Lakes sit in a small basin.

GREEN/BAKER LAKES - Offers a hike between Bishop Creek and Big Pine Creek drainages. 1st elevation listed is the trailhead near Parchers on Bishop Creek. The second elevation is the trailhead in Big Pine Creek Canyon. Green Lake is outside designated wilderness, so no wilderness permit is necessary. However, you must have a campfire permit. Travel to Baker Lake will require the wilderness permit. A little used area, with some stretches of indistinct trail. Experienced hikers with a map will find it full of surprises and solitude.

N. F. BIG PINE CREEK - Trailhead near pack station in the upper part of the canyon. Since the fall floods of 1982 washed out the upper road to the trailhead, all hikers must start from the parking area. Elevations and mileages are to the 7th Lake. This drainage is heavily used.

S. F. BIG PINE CREEK - Trailhead as described for the N. F. Trail. However, the trail start is located about 3/4 mile up the Big Pine Road. Trail construction begun in 1983 will eventually completely rebuild the first 3 miles of this trail which was washed out in 1982. Elevations and distances are to Brainard Lake. Lightly used area.

BIRCH LAKE - Check at Ranger Station for directions to trailhead. A lightly used area. The trail is indistinct in many places.

RED LAKE - Same comments as for Birch Lake.

TABOOSE - Trailhead located at end of Taboose Creek Road, west of Highway 395 between Independence and Big Pine. A steep trail, washed out in places, leads to Taboose Pass and beyond into Kings Canyon National park. Often used as the exit point of loop trips.

"What pains are taken to keep this wilderness in health, showers of snow, showers of rain, showers of light...all sorts of weather, interaction of plant on plant, animal on animal...beyong thought. How fine are nature's methods!"

John Muir, from My First Summer In the Sierra

Green Lake-Bishop Creek Canyon

by Dave McNeill

Green Lake in the Bishop Creek Canyon is a sacred place and the happy hunting ground for the ancestors of the Paiute people. Evidence of the habitation of these people goes back thousands of years and indicates that this area was of prime importance for food gathering. The men hunted deer and mountain sheep while the women and children gathered and prepared food. Everybody pitched in on all the other chores like making camp.

Summer was a wonderful time in the mountains of the Eastern Sierra for the Paiute people. They looked forward to getting up to the higher elevations to beat the heat of the infernal Owens Valley. Many happy times were shared in the high mountain camps of the Paiutes. They established relationships, enjoyed the flowers in the meadows, and lived their life to the fullest just like we do today. The only difference was that they were the only people around at the time living a wild existence in an even more wild land inhabited by Grizzly Bears, coyotes and ravens.

It is amazing to think that all this happened right off the trail that I am walking on to Green Lake. Green Lake is accessed off the road to South Lake about 18 miles from Bishop. There really isn't a trailhead parking area for Green Lake. One trail starts at Parcher's Resort, and people walk in another way via the pipeline at the South Lake trailhead parking. I park at La Hupp picnic area and cross country up to the Green Lake trail in a more direct route.

The trail up from the resort is steep and a little rough. Most people like to go the easy way up the abandoned water pipe, because it is a gradual grade and a nice scenic hike. The pipe can be super hot in summer on the dog's feet and not a good way to go for them. At the top after a lot of sweating and a good heart rate, the trail levels out and continues up the valley toward Green Lake. This hanging valley is a side canyon that was cut off by the main ice sheet as it advanced down towards the valley of Bishop.

Cowboys and sheepherders made good use of the extensive lush meadows in this area and had trails that went up into Coyote Flat for more grazing as summer advanced. It is possible to still find and follow these trails. Miners were up there and later on packers started bringing in deer hunters in the 1920's from the resort at Halliday's Rainbow Camp (now Parcher's camp). Even trappers were working the area for furs, as I found one of the traps they left still hanging from a tree. Trapping is an ugly business. Thankfully, it isn't done much in the Sierra anymore. It is very sad to think of animals having to slowly die starving and struggling to get out of a trap. Then their carcass is discarded just for the fur. I don't like trappers very much, since I have had two of my dogs get caught in them.

My dog, Inyo, dragged a trap out of Pine Creek that was connected by chain to a concrete pier like the ones use to set 4X4 posts. That trapper will never find that trap again.

Another dog I had got caught off Hwy 120 in a trap when she was only six months old. It so traumatized her that I had a hard time calming her down to get the trap off her little paw. So, you can understand why I don't care much for trapping or the people that do it.

Moving on up the trail there is evidence of avalanches and the Limber pines are all wiped out. Some are bent over and still alive, because their roots are attached. Others are a splintered mess from the shock wave produced by an avalanche. This is an unbelievable force that can generate an air blast up to 200 miles per hour. Everything in its path gets wiped out and debris like trees and rock are carried for great distances. Standing in one of these avalanche paths in winter would mean sudden death with no escape.

Next stop up the trail: the Paiute Indian camp. They chose a place deep in the forest along a permanent creek and at the bottom of a series of meadows. It was mosquito infested in early summer and most pleasant later on. Small shelters were erected that resemble modern day dome tents. Rocks that were piled around the base of the huts still remain today. They used flat granite rocks called "metates" to grind seeds and nuts with a "mano" (hand grinding stone). The lush riparian zones along the creeks and meadows provided many varieties of food resources for these people. Everything they needed to survive was there, and they returned year after year handing down the knowledge to the next generations.

Moving up the valley I encountered a small pond, and the trail entered a lush riparian zone beneath Green Lake. Things started to get more interesting as they usually do when one advances up into the higher country. There is more granite, more peaks, and a starkness that is almost haunting. The mountains can be a lonely place if you're not ready for it. To be so isolated and alone out there is to realize your own existence and transition into whatever it is that is coming next.

Finally, I arrived at Green Lake, which really does have green looking water when viewed from above. A road is visible on the far side of the lake that is coming down from Coyote Flat. Green Lake is not in wilderness and is open to OHV (Off Highway Vehicle) travel. A lot of rock has fallen on the road over the years, and because this area is outside of wilderness, no permit is required to camp there other than a California campfire permit. You can get one of those down at a Forest Service office, and they are good for a year. Beware of fire restrictions that may be in effect. It is always best to use existing fire rings before constructing new ones, because the less charcoal and rocks the better.

Well, it is time for Windy and me to head back down the trail and conclude this little hiking session. I enjoyed sharing Green Lake with you, because it is really a unique place off the beaten path. Until I write again, may the joy of the mountains bring you peace and happiness all the days of your lives.

WILDERNESS HIKING

BISHOP CREEK: NORTH & MIDDLE FORKS

INYO National Forest

SABRINA BASIN TRAILHEAD
From Hwy 395 in Bishop, turn west on Line St. (Hwy 168) and continue approx. 18 mi. to Lk. Sabrina. Day use parking is at roads end. Overnight parking is located at turnout near North Lk. turnoff.

TRAILHEAD ELEVATION
9,125 Feet

TRAIL DIFFICULTY
Leisurely to moderate.

TRAIL DESCRIPTION
The Sabrina Basin trail leads into a basin of 13,00 ft. granite peaks surrounding a number of alpine lakes. Wildflowers are abundant and fishing is good for rainbow, brown and brook trout. The trail is primarily a hiking trail but is also used by pack stock. Remember, stock have the right of way. Move off trail and stand quietly to avoid spooking stock.

A steep path of switchbacks off the main trail leads to George Lk. One may continue up and over Table Mtn. to Tyee Lks. The path over Table Mtn. is a bit obscure but the views are remarkable.

The main trail will lead to Blue Lk., a beautiful spot for photography with the rugged Thompson Ridge reflecting in the clear waters of the lake.

The right fork beyond Blue Lk. will lead through a forest of lodgepole pine with glacial erratics scattered about. (boulders carried by ice for a distance that come to rest where ice has melted) Hikers following this trail have access to Dingleberry, Hungry Packer, and Midnight Lks. The backdrop of these lakes is magnificent with the jagged peaks of the Sierra Crest being dominated by Mt. Darwin & Mt. Haeckel.

A path marked with cairns beyond Blue Lk. (left fork) will lead to Donkey & Baboon Lks. These lakes are seated below the glaciated ramparts of Mts. Powell (13,360 ft. and Thompson (13,440 ft.)

PIUTE PASS & LAMARCK LAKES TRAILHEAD
Same directions as for Sabrina only turn right at North Lake turnoff. Trailhead parking is by North Lk. near pack station but actual trailhead is about 1/2 mi. farther at North Lk. campground. No parking is allowed in campground for hikers.

TRAILHEAD ELEVATION
9,500 Feet

TRAILHEAD DIFFICULTY
Leisurely to moderate.

TRAIL DESCRIPTION
The Piute Pass trail eases up through a forest of lodgepole and quaking aspens before following the North Fork of Bishop Creek. Paintbrush, columbine and penstemon flank the trail as one climbs higher near the rusty cliffs of the Piute Crags and Mt. Emerson. Entering the high country above Loch Leven, the glaciated canyon is floored with smooth granite and small alpine meadows. Yellow-bellied marmots can be seen sunning on rocks or dashing into the shadows. Over Piute Pass (11,423) the trail drops into Humphreys Basin, loaded with many high alpine lakes.

The Lamarck Lks. trail begins at the campground and heads south across 2 footbridges through a grove of aspen trees. From the upper part of the trail, views of Mt. Emerson and the reddish Piute Crags are seen. This country is rugged and rocky with sheer cliffs of granite and rough boulder slopes. Lower Lamarck Lk. lies in a small granite basin. Cross the stream and outlet and follow the flowered trail to the upper lake.

All hikers should be prepared for the changing weather conditions in the high country. Thunderstorms can appear suddenly without warning bringing cold rains and snow at any time of the year.

Due to the presence of giardia, all drinking water should be treated or boiled at least 3 minutes.

United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service
White Mountain Ranger District

GUIDEBOOKS

Sierra South-100 Backcountry Trips by Thomas & Jason Winnett-Wilderness Press

Wildflowers 3 The Sierra Nevada by Elizabeth L. Horn-Touchstone Press

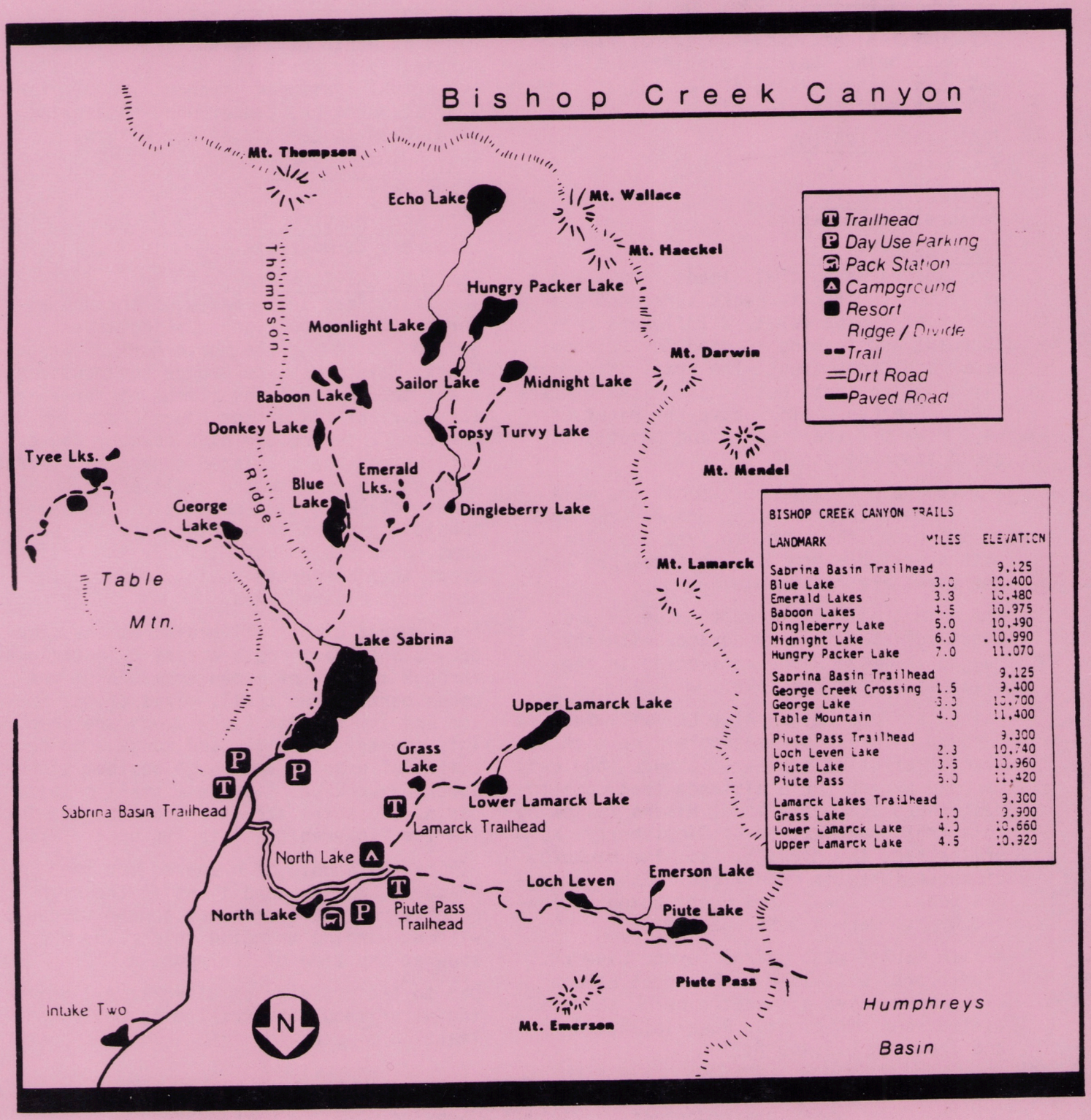
California Landscape Origin & Evolution by Mary Hill-University of California Press

MAPS

USGS-15 min. quad. Mt. Goddard
7.5 min. quad. Mt. Darwin
& Mt. Thompson

USFS-John Muir Wilderness & Sequoia/Kings Canyon National Parks Topo (15 min. scale)

*All maps & books listed can be purchased from the White Mtn. Ranger Station in Bishop.



BISHOP CREEK CANYON TRAILS

LANDMARK	MILES	ELEVATION
Sabrina Basin Trailhead		9,125
Blue Lake	3.0	10,400
Emerald Lakes	3.3	10,480
Baboon Lakes	4.5	10,975
Dingleberry Lake	5.0	10,490
Midnight Lake	6.0	10,990
Hungry Packer Lake	7.0	11,070
Sabrina Basin Trailhead		9,125
George Creek Crossing	1.5	9,400
George Lake	3.0	10,700
Table Mountain	4.0	11,400
Piute Pass Trailhead		9,300
Loch Leven Lake	2.3	10,740
Piute Lake	3.5	10,960
Piute Pass	5.0	11,420
Lamarck Lakes Trailhead		9,300
Grass Lake	1.0	9,900
Lower Lamarck Lake	4.0	10,660
Upper Lamarck Lake	4.5	10,920

"The Other Side of California... the Eastern Sierra"

Photo Courtesy of Lance Wegoner

"Small Town with a BIG Backyard"

Bishop

Bishop is located at the northern end of Inyo County in the beautiful Owens Valley where Highway 395 meets U.S. Route 6.

While Bishop has the largest population and is the only incorporated city in Inyo County, it definitely maintains a **friendly home-town atmosphere.**

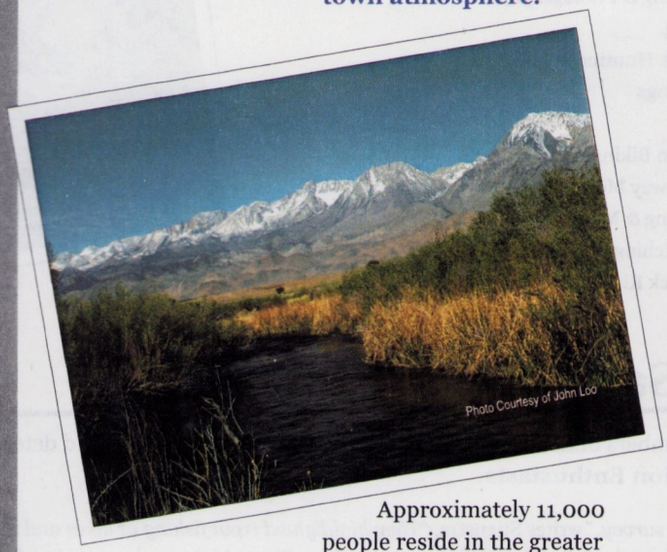


Photo Courtesy of John Loo

Approximately 11,000 people reside in the greater Bishop area. Bishop is a small town with very modern amenities including I-Main (free Wi-Fi downtown and in the City Park). The recently completed Digital 395 broadband project delivers 150 Gigabit fiber optic, middle mile/backhaul capacity to the region.

Bishop is a terrific place to call "home" while exploring the Eastern Sierra. Lodging establishments abound, with about 850 rooms ranging from quite luxurious to rustic cabins. Campgrounds operated by USFS, BLM, Inyo County and private owners are also abundant in the area.

In Bishop, you'll find great restaurants to suit any taste, including American Fare, Mexican Cuisine, plus Chinese, Japanese and Thai delicacies.

Highway 395 is Bishop's Main Street, featuring several art galleries and unique retail shops.

To thoroughly enjoy Bishop, you really must take a side trip off Main Street. Try Line Street (aka Highway 168). To the East on Line Street, you'll cross the Owens River and to the West, you'll find the glorious mountains, lakes and streams of Bishop Creek Canyon. In the summer months, Lake Sabrina, South Lake and North Lake offer world-class trout fishing. In the fall, the Aspens and Cottonwoods turn fiery colors of yellow, orange and red. Photography buffs from around the world visit the canyon in hopes of capturing just a shot or two of the splendor.

Pleasant Valley Reservoir, the Owens River and Buckley Ponds offer **fantastic year-round fishing!**

In the center of town, be sure to visit the Bishop City Park with several acres of beautifully maintained grass, shade trees, flowers and a picture perfect duck pond – a great place to picnic!

The **Bishop Country Club** is a challenging 18-hole course with breathtaking views, plus full service pro shop, restaurant & bar.

If you're feeling lucky, be sure to visit the **Paiute Palace Casino**, just a few miles north-west of downtown on Highway 395.

Other Bishop "must sees" include **Laws Railroad Museum & Historical Site, Downtown Murals, Paiute-Shoshone Cultural Center, Keough's Hot Springs,** and the **Buttermilk Recreation Area.**

The Bishop Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Bureau is conveniently located at the City Park. The visitor center is open daily with friendly and knowledgeable staff.

Whether you are in the area for just an hour, a day or a week, be sure to stop in for free maps & brochures to help you make the most of your Eastern Sierra adventure.

Visit online at **www.bishopvisitor.com** or call toll free 1-888-395-3952.

To Grassy and beyond

7-14-07

By Dave McNeill

With the low snow year, it seemed like a perfect time to head up above North Lake to Grassy Lake for a great day-hike.

One of the more popular little lakes in the Bishop Creek Canyon area is North Lake. Located about 17 miles from the town of Bishop, North Lake is accessed by a scary one-lane dirt road up the mountain. If one wheel goes off the shoulder of this road, you better hope you can get your seat belt off and bail out in time. Otherwise, they will find what remains of you 1,000 feet below at the Cardinal Lodge, and you won't be checking out.

I decided to go up the old trail to Grassy Lake and loop around via the little peak that overlooks Sabrina Lake. It was off this old trail that I came across a Jeffrey pine tree at a higher elevation than I have ever seen one before. At 10,000 feet the only other trees that surround this Jeffrey are Limber pines. The closest Jeffrey pine to that location is at least 1,000 feet lower and miles away. The seed for this tree had to be transported by a bird or animal and by some miracle, it sprouted and grew at that special place. I am astounded how this Jeffrey pine is proof that there are many bizarre adaptations in nature. It is very possible that this single tree is the highest growing Jeffrey pine in the Sierra.

Grassy is an awesome little lake not far from the trailhead. I don't like the half-mile walk from the parking lot through the campground, so I take a shortcut up the old cowboy trail. It starts where the road crosses the creek before you turn right to head to the parking area. Straight ahead is the campground. The trail is short and steep and levels out at the top. It turns into a beautiful walk through a lodgepole pine forest along the creek. There are small meadows and riparian zones along the way with lots of flowers.

The lodgepole pine forests are buffed out and look like the forest fairies came in and raked up all the branches and debris. The floor is perfect in these quiet places deep in the forest, where it is more protected from the violence of the storms. In other places there are many blowdowns where the trees have been thinned by the wind.

However, there is a price to pay in these deep, lush places. The more lush the riparian zones get, the thicker the mosquitoes are. It is always a trade-off in the woods. Many a hiker has been known to run out of the mountains driven to madness by the unrelenting mosquitoes.

Unless you're wearing a new layer of bug repellent, you have to keep moving all the time and can never relax. Just when you are tired, hot, sweating profusely and need to rest, the mosquitoes will swarm on you. Your breath is exuding heat way out from your body that the little blood suckers home in on. I wonder how the Native Americans survived without repellent. Don't forget yours.

The farther I went up the trail to Grassy Lake, I began to notice that the sagebrush and rabbit brush looks like it wants to bloom a full month earlier than usual. Things are different now. Climate change and drought are doing weird things. A lot of trees are dying from blister rust or beetles in different locations. This trip I was able to walk beneath waterfalls at South Lake where you usually couldn't pass under this time of year. I cannot remember a summer that has ever been this dry in the Sierra.

As I arrived at Grassy, I thought about how this is one of the most beautiful views around. It is lush and green with radical rust-colored mountains shooting straight up. It has a history of sheepherders and cowboys. An old trail leads up out of the inlet creek of Grassy to the second Lamarck Lake. Two people a year probably use it: a guy named Mark and I. Another well-built trail goes up to the first Lamarck Lake and the wonderful, Wonder Lakes basin. Talk about outstanding, this area has it all. Above the second Lamarck Lake is the famous Lamarck Coll where all the backpackers and climbers take a shortcut over the Sierra Crest without having to face death defying cliffs. As I stood in the meadow at Grassy Lake watching my dog Windy run through the grass and looking at the 360-degree beauty, I thought to myself, I don't know how much closer a person can get to heaven on earth than this. Later, I decided to climb up a small peak that overlooks Sabrina in the next basin over.

Everywhere there is evidence of where massive ice sheets pushed up huge blocks of granite and plowed them into the sides of mountains leaving moraines. It is steep and a little scary, and I had to scramble up the slope. Windy has no fear or vertigo, but I feared for her. I kept telling myself not to look down and keep moving up. The trees are getting more gnarly from the severe blasts of wind, sand and snow in this exposed area. I arrived at the top on a knife-back ridge that looks straight down on Lake Sabrina. It is so steep that I would never go down it. Even in an emergency it would be tough.

Sabrina is beautiful even though it is a reservoir. It must have been enchanting before the dam was built, when the creek rolled through beautiful meadows. Nevertheless, it is still beautiful and multi-colored. It is one fantastic area to hike, boat and fish.

After enjoying the view, I headed back down a sandy slope that I scoped out from down below. It is always important to plan where you are going to enter and exit when you go cross country. It is all about staying out of the cliffs. Then it was back to the car and homeward bound.

What a luck guy I am! I just bagged another wonderful hike and learned all kinds of new things about nature. I never get tired of it. Happy trails to you.

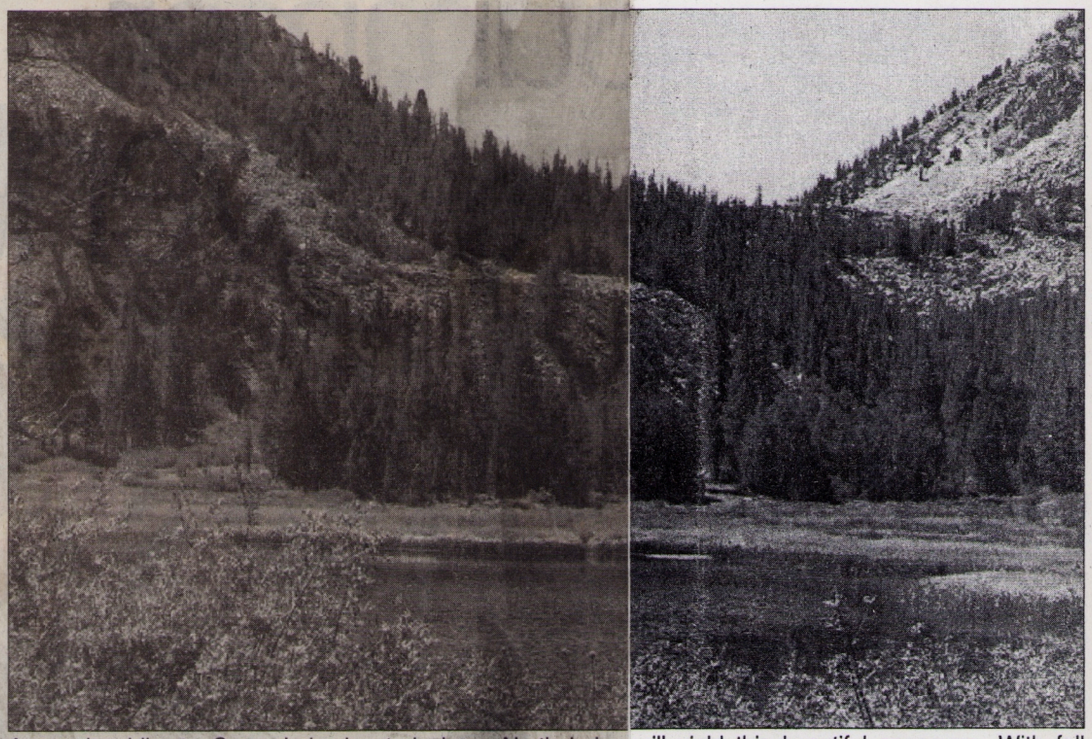
(David McNeill has lived in Bishop since 1974, working for the water district for the Forest Service for most of that time. At home in the wilderness, he does a lot of hiking with his springer spaniel, Windy. And with a taste for writing that he explored during stints at Mammoth's Channel 5 and Mono Herald, *he has a drawer full of stories to share.)*

WHAT I DID LAST WEEKEND 9-11-04

See other side

Rotary Club journeys to Grass Lake

By Ann Fulton



A morning hike to Grass Lake located above North Lake will yield this beautiful panorama. With fall approaching fast, get out into the mountains before it's too cold. *Photo by Ann Fulton*

Grass Lake was the destination last Sunday for a Bishop Rotary Club-sponsored hike led by John Fulton. This possible-loop trail provides one of the most rewarding short hikes in our part of the Sierra with all the best elements of forest, streams, lakes, views, and just enough ruggedness to keep things physically invigorating.

We always expect to meet oncoming vehicles driving up and back on the narrow, and narrower in places, road to North Lake off State Route 168. North Lake is a popular spot with fishermen, campers, day hikers and backpackers; the hikers' parking lot, next to the pack station, is usually just about full, but we've always managed to squeeze in – the earlier the start, the better.

Our least favorite leg of hiking from North Lake is the half-mile on the road from the parking area to the actual trailhead in the upper part of the campground. A short distance above the campground restrooms and just past the last of the carry-in campsites, the trail splits at a sign indicating straight ahead for Piute Pass and left, south-southwest, for Lamarck Lakes (and Grass Lake). Several footbridges span the North Fork Bishop Creek rivulets at the beginning of the Lamarck Lakes trail, followed by switchbacks up through forest brimming with aspens. About a mile up, the trail passes through an avenue of lodgepoles before you reach a sign on a tree marking the spur to Grass Lake.

It's about another quarter-mile and about a 150-foot descent to the lake through open forest peppered with granite boulders. We explored the northwest side of the lake on a use trail that brought us to a tumbling stream with two forks to cross on low-lying logs and large rocks. Tall walking sticks came in handy for balancing and steadying.

This spreading, inlet creek for Grass Lake originates at Lower Lamarck Lake, and apparently is performing one of its natural functions by depositing silt as it flows into this basin. The lake is lovely in its incipient meadow setting, surrounded by a boggy shore with lush grasses on the southern and western extremities, and conifers encroaching from the steep surrounding terrain as enough soil compacts for them to get toeholds.

We retraced our steps to the "central gallery" of the lake where a conveniently situated log on dry ground made a good snack stop. To finish our loop route, we followed a sketchy trail on around Grass to the east and its outlet stream. There's a double crossing here as the lake waters are fanned out in an almost placid, marshy backwater

over

The hike to Grass Lake features many shallow stream crossings like this one. *Photo by Ann Fulton*

before coalescing into a rushing mountain stream farther down. Multiple side-by-side logs make this transverse section fairly easy.

The final jaunt downhill is surprisingly wonderful, even though the trail is marked on the map as a lesser track. It's even more woodsy than the uphill on the main Larmarck Lakes Trail. The trail skirts the wide, dashing stream most of the way. The lay of the land is gentle slopes and small clearings, at first. Where the stream bunches up and takes a header over the lip of the ridge in view of North Lake, the trail dives into steep switchbacks and perilous pitches, riveting your attention for a bit. And, just as abruptly, the path settles into a cakewalk as the stream becomes a meander through the final meadow and joins North Lake.

We congratulated ourselves for choosing the "right" direction for undertaking this loop hike, although I hate to admit our decision had a lot more to do with dumb luck than sagacity. We figure we covered about four mile all told, with a 600-foot elevation gain. Even with foot dragging and dawdling down the home stretch soaking up the seductive atmosphere, we used less than a half day – leaving plenty of time to kick back at home and read the Sunday paper.

References: "Hot Showers Soft Beds, and Dayhikes in the Sierra: Walks and Strolls near Lodgings," by Kathy Morey.

Map: "John Muir Wilderness" available from White Mountain Ranger Station on Main Street, Bishop (Dated 1993; two 36" x 48" sheets includes high country and adjacent Inyo and Sierra National Forests. For convenient trail use I cut out the pertinent section to tuck in my pack, rather than trying to carry one of those huge sheets)

GRASS LAKE

It had been eight months since my last hike into Sabrina Basin, when I ventured up a snow-covered trail for 3 long miles to Blue Lake. For some reason, this summer I didn't make my annual trek to Hungry Packer Lake, situated perfectly beneath appropriately-named Picture Peak. Well, the time had come to head up the trail near Lake Sabrina, and this would be a very special hike last weekend as my son Kevin, his dog Vedder and our friend John would be joining me. It ended up being a great two days staying at the historic Bishop Creek Lodge and exploring our Sierra Nevada.

My son Kevin met John and I on Thursday at the lodge around 3 p.m. where we setup our stuff at the Brook Cabin, which had an awesome view up South Fork Bishop Creek Canyon towards South Lake. The fall colors were exploding all around us, just as the sun began to set behind the high ridge to the west. We started a nice fire in the fire pit, cooked up some sausages on the grill and enjoyed each other's company for the remainder of the evening. Before long we were all cozy in our rustic mountain cabin at Bishop Creek Lodge, yet eager to hit the trail in the morning.

We woke up bright and early to a very cold wind blowing down canyon, shaking the Aspen leaves from the nearby trees onto our vehicles. We didn't care about that, all we wanted to do was go, go, go and enjoy the mountains. John had never been to North Lake, so that's where we headed first. We drove through Aspendell, turned right on North Lake Road and parked in a deserted parking area near the pack station, followed by a nice walk to the other side of the lake, where we took many pictures while admiring the extreme beauty of the area.

Kevin and Vedder taking a break on the Sabrina Basin Trail above Lake Sabrina.

The original plan for the day was to hike up the Sabrina Basin Trail to Blue Lake (3 miles) and decide if we should continue up the trail to Dingleberry Lake, or just kick back at Blue Lake for a while and have a nice leisurely hike back on the return. The latter would prevail on this cold fall day.

It was a little after 10:30 a.m. when we started up the trail, three guys and one excited Texas Heeler 2-year-old named Vedder. He absolutely loves to hike, and if he could talk I guarantee you he would agree 100 percent. After a mile we past the turnoff to George Lake, then crossed its vigorous outlet stream on a series of well-placed boulders. Then began a set of shaded switchbacks that led to the top of a ridge, with incredible views of the Sierra Crest. We could have turned around here and been completely satisfied, but the vote was unanimous to continue on to Blue Lake.

After hiking 2 miles in a windy and cold situation, we entered a rocky section of the trail and climbed a staircase of nicely placed boulders steeply uphill, then leveled off slightly between two tall pine trees. A great time was being had between the four of us, talking about past hikes and planning new ones in the future, while huffing and puffing up the trail, gradually getting closer and closer to Blue Lake. Still having not seen another human to this point, we hiked up the final wash and emerged at completely gorgeous Blue Lake, surrounded by Thompson Ridge and Picture Peak, barely peeking above the peak in front.

We crossed the outlet on some floating logs, traversed the west of the lake on slick granite and found a perfect spot to relax next to the shore. It was the perfect scenario, hanging out at 10,500 feet with my son, his dog Vedder and our lifelong friend John in our magnificent Eastern Sierra.

(Craig Jackson is a Bishop resident and avid hiker/backpacker who enjoys exploring his new backyard after having relocated here in 2013 from Southern California. Email him at Sierracj51@gmail.com.)

Take the Tyee Lakes trailhead for a short day hike or an may b

The Tyee Lakes trail can be an easy hike to the first lake or a more strenuous hike over Table Mountain

By Stan Conger
Sports Staff

8-23-2008

The Tyee Lakes trailhead out of the south fork of Bishop Creek is a good bet for just about any level of hiker.

It can be a comfortable two-hour round-trip to the first of the two Tyee Lakes and back or it can be a much more strenuous day-long trek over Table Mountain and back down past George Lake to the other end of the trail at Lake Sabrina.

Those who want a simple two-hour day hike ending at a beautiful lake, with a return back to their car, will be better off starting at the south fork trailhead.

The trailhead is located between Bishop Creek Lodge and Parchers Resort on the road to South Lake. Willow campground is above the trail, so you've missed it if you're driving uphill and reach that camping area.

A sturdy wood bridge leads across Bishop Creek and the trail immediately begins climbing, but it levels off or becomes a more gentle climb in several sections.

The bridge is a beautiful spot in its own right, as it affords the opportunity to just stand and watch the creek flow by.

Although the trail is hot and dry at first, it soon takes you through stands of pine and shade. There are places where a small creek flows across the trail as well.

One water bottle per person is enough if you're not going to explore Table Mountain, provided you have a good water filter to pump fresh water into your bottle. You can fill up at the Tyee Lakes and again at George Lake.

The first of the two Tyee Lakes is beautiful and the largest of the two. It's a good spot for that two-hour hike and comes complete with a sandy beach at the end nearest the trail when you first arrive.

The second lake is no slouch either. You will have to be the judge as to which is the most beautiful, although a decision that each has its own charm is probably going to be the ultimate conclusion.

Bring your lunch with you and have a picnic there, perhaps sitting on the beach and cooling your feet in the water. Just remember to pack everything out that you bring with you.

Those who wish a more energetic outing can continue on to the top of Table Mountain (11,696). The decision on the route at this point depends upon previous planning. Either it's back the same route to return to your car, or you've made transportation arrangements at the Lake Sabrina side of the mountain and will continue on down the other side.

It's a longer hike down to the trailhead at Lake Sabrina from Table Mountain than it is back to the south fork side, but you pass Lake George along the way and that's another beautiful site.

There is also the possibility of an even longer trip, since the trail down to Lake Sabrina intersects another trail that branches off to other lakes such as Blue Lake, Hungry Packer Lake and Midnight Lake.

These added trips would require an overnight stay, however, unless the hiker is used to very long days on the trail and is in condition to hike at a strong pace. Since the additional trail routes begin not far from the Lake Sabrina trailhead, hiking to those lakes would make more sense with a start from the Lake Sabrina side.

There are a lot of hiking options like these on our side of the Sierra Nevada mountains. Just get a good trail map and plan a trip to your taste. The rest is simply a matter of going out to hike and enjoy the scenery.

The first of the two Tyee Lakes includes a nice sandy beach near the trail – a good place to cool hot feet. Photo by Stan Conger

Tyee Lakes Trail

by Dave McNeill

If you ever want to see how trails were constructed years ago, go up the Tyee Lakes Trail in Bishop Creek Canyon. Those old trail crews literally had to drill and blast their way up the entire trail to below the first lake, a distance of nearly two miles.

Just try to walk cross-country up there and you will always wind up back on the trail. The area is granite boulders and steep, faulted, glaciated terrain that is very difficult and dangerous to hike anywhere off the trail.
Those old trail builders knew exactly where they had to put the trail from hiking the area over and over again. You can see where they changed their mind in spots and went a different way, sometimes abandoning a lot of their previous work.

It was a tough business working on the Tyee Trail. Every morning the crew would have to hike to the job from wherever they were camped. They had to bring in rock drills and bits, all the tools, wheelbarrows and tons of dynamite. All these things had to be packed in on mules including the entire camp set up and food for the crew. A typical camp would require about 25 mule loads. Tools and equipment were extra. Then the camp had to be resupplied every week.

It is a good thing there were not many people out hiking the trails in those days when the Tyee Trail was being worked on, because they were drilling and blasting nearly every day all summer long. They did not blast when thunderstorms rolled in. Some men would be ahead of the crew drilling and setting charges while others were cleaning up the area from the previous blast. They even had a special set up to sharpen drill bits out in the field that ran off the motor of the gas-powered rock drill.

They didn't have the luxury of modern day explosives back then like ANFO (ammonium nitrate-fuel oil) that can be used without a lot of drilling. These types of explosives, which are the favorite of terrorists, can be loaded on top and around rocks. The force of the blast is directed down into the rock to pulverize it. Then the crushed rock can be used for trail tread and bore holes from drilling are not evident. It makes for a more natural, clean look. In fact, a good blaster will leave very little fragmented rock, and most hikers would not know that a blast even occurred there as they walk by.

Trees do get scarred though and that is where a blaster has to be careful not to cause too much damage to them. Sometimes it is unavoidable and trees get blown up along with any little animals that may be living there. Along the Tyee Trail there are many trees that are scarred from the intense blasting in the past.

Nowadays a blaster can walk along and set a bag of ANFO on each small rock he wants to blow and many bags on larger rocks. A piece of detonation cord can be run for a long distance in between each rock to be blasted. In the old days they had to carry around rock drills that weighed 100 pounds, bore a hole in each rock, place a stick of dynamite in the hole, and it was real time consuming. Not to mention the mess that it left with the blasted rock fragments all over the ground and bore holes evident everywhere.

A lot of the blast rock was used to build retaining walls along the trail. As a blaster and trail builder, I have never seen so much blasting along a single trail than the Tyee Lakes Trail. It is truly an incredible job that most people who hike don't even notice. By the time the trail crew reached the first lake, they were at their peak of trail building skill. They were in easier country now and made some nice switchbacks up to the second lake and beyond. The Tyee Lakes Trail has been reconstructed several times since the summer it was built, but the steps are eroded out and up to two or more feet high. That makes it dangerous for stock users.

Tyee Lakes Trail goes into a side canyon with four lakes off the road to South Lake in Bishop Creek Canyon, approximately 18 miles from town. It is a moderate hike going up a steep hillside through a lodgepole forest and into the limber pines at above 10,000 feet. People often cross over the pass on Table Mountain from George Lake in the Sabrina Basin or vice versa. It is an overnight trip for most people and requires two cars. Just below the first lake are the remains of a small 8X10 foot cabin that appears to have been constructed in the 1930s.

John Fulton, Ann Fulton and Delia Pisculli take a lunch break on the shores of Mary Louise Lakes with Mt. Goode off to the left and the slopes of Mt. Hurd in the background. *Photo by Leo Pisculli*

WHAT I DID LAST WEEKEND

Hike to Marie Louise Lakes

By Ann Fulton

We have some marvelous local trail choices for any time you just need to escape the valley's heat or you only have part of a day to get away. The Bishop Rotary Club sponsored a hike, led by Leo Pisculli, to Marie Louise Lakes on just such an occasion.

The highlights of this hike are it's a gorgeous destination, it's shady most of the way, it's only four miles round trip and very few of the day hikers, fishermen and backpackers crowding the Bishop Pass Trail go this way.

Though Bishop Pass Trail up from South Lake is perhaps the most popular in our area with weekenders and locals heading to Long Lake, we didn't see another soul once we'd turned left, north-northeast, at the sign for Marie Louise Lakes. This side trail is 0.6 miles up and it's only another half mile to the larger and more scenic of the two lakes. Some maps and reference sources say "Mary Louise," but the lakes were named for Marie Louise, wife of W.C. Parcher, of Parcher's Camp, established in 1922.

Leo Pisculli, Ann Fulton and John Fulton (l-r) stop for a moment at the junction of Bishop Pass trail and Mary Louise Lakes trail. *Photo by Della Pisculli*

The trail is obvious, if lightly used, that last half-mile. The route dips into a flower-strewn meadow where Chocolate Peak looms immediately to the southeast.

Just beyond an easy stream crossing, the trail swings southeast through the trees on the upper verge of the meadow, followed by a steep, rocky ascent of

See HIKE, page B-2

OVER

The dramatic shoreline of Mary Louise Lakes with Chocolate Peak in the background along with the excellent trail make an excursion up Bishop Pass a great summer experience. *Photo by Leo Pisculli*

HIKE

Continued from page B-1

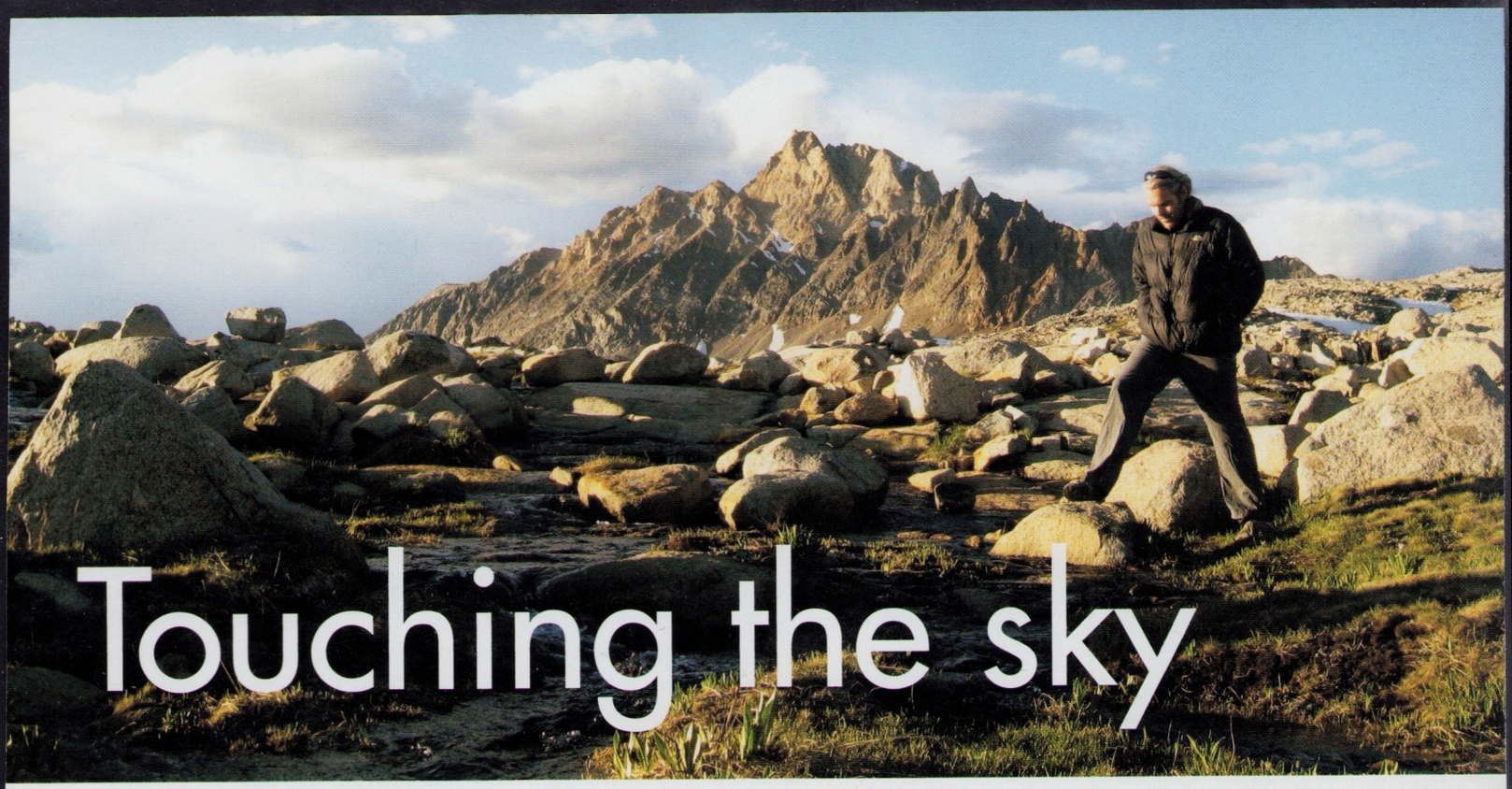
a forested wall northeast of the little valley on mostly solid footing and steadfast boulders for scrambling up.

The scramble ends on a bench of shaded granite outcrops giving way to the tranquil marine hues of the lake and outstanding views of Chocolate Peak and the Inconsolable Range, considered by many to be one of the most dramatic sub-ranges of the Sierra. Looking at the sheer, broken face of Cloudripper, 13,501 feet, it's hard to imagine there's a Class I route (easy hiking) to the top from Seventh Lake over on the Palisade Basin side. The surroundings here include Mt. Goode and Hurd Peak.

Isolated as Marie Louise is from traffic on the main trail, and nestled all along its far side by a sheer granite cliff under the brow of those higher peaks, the wildness of the lake has an encapsulating effect. There are comfortable perches for lunch and conversation offering an at-hand view of the lake and a "bide-a-wee" atmosphere. And it's not far back to the parking lot.

References: "Hot Showers, Soft Beds, and Dayhikes in the Sierra: Walks and Strolls near Lodgings," Kathy Morey.

Map: John Muir Wilderness available from White Mountain Ranger Station on Main Street, Bishop (Dated 1993; two 36" x 48" sheets; includes high country adjacent to Inyo and Sierra National Forests, including Sequoia and Kings Canyon. For convenient trail use, I cut out the pertinent section to tuck in my pack, rather than trying to carry one of those huge sheets).



Touching the sky

High above Bishop Creek, giant 11,380-foot Desolation Lake is the bigger of the high-country lakes

Story and photos by
Wendilyn Grasseschi

Clambering up a slippery, gray, granite slope, breath coming hard in the eleven thousand-feet elevation, the mid-day mist is thick and dark. Although it is just four o'clock in the afternoon, I can barely see two hundred feet ahead of me. The heavy rain falls in thick sheets. I am bone-cold and drenched after a twelve-mile hike up to this place, but I follow the soggy lines on my map, seeking treasure in the cold and wet

I climb a last ridge and stop, hard. The wind nearly knocks me off my feet here, but even in the thick gloom, I can see the gleaming silver mirror of a lake that looks to me this day as big as the ocean. Its shores disappear into the mist in three directions, and the wind and rain have created crashing surf on the gold-gray beach in front of me. The sound is deafening—crash, boom, slam, crash—and my feet, already wet from the four-hour hike, are now drenched.

To the east, my right, the thick bulk of a giant granite slab rises out of the mist, rain and wind swirling past it like the breath of the world. It spires into the sky, turreted and somber and looking like a lair of some giant beast.

To the west, the mountains rise into the gloom, the top three thousand feet of them lost in the gray day.

Then, in a moment, the sky tears and shreds. The wind ships the grey up off the ground; the rain scatters like a deer, running hard from the lion. The mist whips into a fine light and the light breaks into a fine mist and the sun, the glorious sun, appears.

The sky catches fire. The mist catches fire. The waves crashing before my feet catch fire.

Most of all, this crashing lake in front of me catches fire. It is huge—this Desolation Lake—huge, and it fills the ground, the sky, the earth—a roiling, noisy kaleidoscope of gold and scarlet and silver and copper, stretching from one end of the horizon to the other.

High above it, the winged peaks of the high country basin sweep the clearing afternoon sky—Mt. Humphreys dominating this world like a king on a throne, Four Gables and Emerson peaks just a little lower.

I sink to my knees where I stand and for the next hour, I don't move a foot, transfixed by the light show that flashes and shimmers and sings above and below and before me.

When it ends and the summer sun once again takes its rightful place in a blue sky, I turn and head back down, knowing this will not be the last time.

I've come here for the reason I go to so many places: because the fine blue lines on the topographical map and the big blue pool of color that is Desolation Lake told me to.

I'd never been to the Eastern Sierra that day, never seen it. I was camped down on the west side of the range where I lived and worked and from where I had come this morning, climbing the steep, rocky trail from Paiute Creek some three thousand feet below me.

But that giant lake haunted me, drew me like a Siren's Song, with its mile-wide girth and miles-long shores and thick green meadows and scarlet flowers and grey silver granite and sky that never stopped and surf that crashed like the ocean and when I moved to the Eastern Sierra three years later, it was in no small part due to this lake.

I hiked then to Desolation Lake via the Bishop area's Paiute Pass on a sunny and warm summer day. I fell in love once again with the huge lake—its stark but lush green tundra, its sandy beaches and a deep indigo sky thrown back at itself by the lake's reflection. I stayed for two days, basking in the sun, sleeping on granite slabs, living on sky and water and light and not much else.

I return almost every year, just to make sure that some things in life too lovely to comprehend never change.

So go on.

Get out there.

A world of light and rock

Begin your hike at the Paiute Pass trailhead. The trail begins to climb almost immediately, in a series of switchbacks and climbing grades, angling up toward the first of three large lakes on the way to the pass.

The first mile of the hike is very lush, filled with willow, lodgepole pine, wildflowers and small creek crossings. It can also be a bit buggy, so bring your bug repellent.

The trail begins to open up at about one mile in, as it starts the climb up the right side of Paiute Canyon. The trail is still well graded, however, making the elevation gain relatively easy.

At about two miles, you pop up over a waterfall-covered rim of granite and see the first lake in this basin, Loch Leven Lake, at ten thousand, seven hundred feet.

The view back toward Bishop and the White Mountains is as stunning as the view in front of you. It's a good place for a break before you begin the second half of the climb up to the pass.

Continue walking west, following the shore of the little lake. The landscape is now classic High Sierra alpine country; grassy green tundra covered with sedges and wildflowers, trickling streams and racing waterfalls, big ponds and swimming holes not far from the trail, high granite peaks on both sides of you scouring the sky.

At about three miles in from the trailhead, the second big lake of Piute Canyon lies in front of you. Piute Lake sits in a green bowl at about eleven thousand feet, full of brown and rainbow trout, lined with flowers, fed by the big, ever-present snowfield not too far above you.

Continue on up the trail as the landscape becomes increasingly stark, yet sublimely beautiful. You are entering a world of light and granite and sky; trees diminishing with every foot you gain in elevation.

Like in a classic Japanese painting, where every single line counts, this country doesn't have much patience with extravagance. Grassy meadows give way to granite slopes and late summer snowfields are still very much in evidence. Looking west, you can see the top of the pass about two feet above you.

The trail climbs the last mile to the top of the rocky pass, alternating rocky tread with some snowy patches.

At about five miles, you are standing on top of Piute Pass, looking west into the vast reaches of the Sierra high country. To the south is the Darwin Canyon and Evolution Basin country, some of the region's most rugged backcountry.

To the north lies 13,992-foot Mount Humphreys, a Mecca for serious climbers.

Continue over the pass if you are going to try for Desolation Lake. Drop down the trail for about a mile, then begin to angle cross country where the outlet from Little Desolation Lake crosses the trail.

Follow this stream over slabs of granite and pockets of meadow and flowers until you reach the lake. Walking here is a joy; soft grassy turf, easy creek hopping, birds and flowers everywhere.

Keep going past Lower Desolation Lake (a worthy goal in its own right if you want to stop now) choosing whichever side of the lake you'd like to follow.

Use your map and angle toward 11,380-foot Desolation Lake. Aiming for the west end of the lake looks longer, but it's easier than going over the five-hundred-foot rock bluff between you and the lake on the east side.

Desolation comes into sight after about six and a half miles in from the trailhead.

Retrace your steps to the trailhead.

The hike

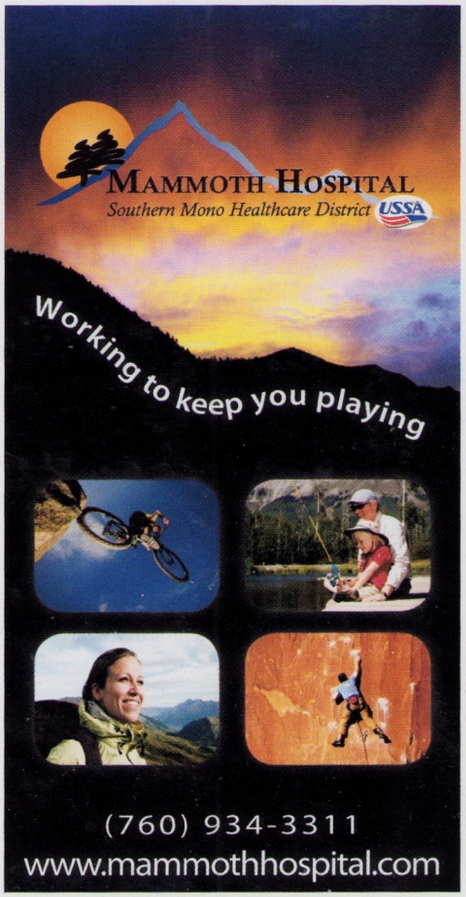
Length: About five miles to top of Puite Pass, about 2.2 miles more to Desolation Lake
Difficulty: Strenuous. Some cross country route finding required if you hike past Paiute Pass to Desolation Lake, 11,380 feet
Elevation gain and loss: About two thousand, one hundred feet to the top of the pass; about six hundred feet more if you drop and climb to Desolation
Notes: Piute Pass is about eleven car miles west of Bishop, one of the headwater basins of Bishop Creek. It, like Kearsarge Pass far to the south, is one of the easiest ways to access the High Sierra backcountry, no matter which side of the mountains you live on. In four short (though steep) miles, you can get from your car in the parking lot at North Lake to the top of the eleven-thousand foot pass, passing by a series of lakes emptied by cascading waterfalls and a creek full of swimming holes and wildflowers at their peak. The hike to the top of the pass alone is worth the effort, even if you never make it to Desolation.

If you are relatively comfortable with your cross-country route-finding skills, this is a good place to try them out. It's safe country up here, no bears or people or cliffs or topographical surprises that can come back to bite you and strand you on a 40-foot high cliff that the topo didn't catch.

Desolation Lake lies another two and a half miles to the north of the pass, an easy cross country route over rolling green tundra, past dozens of smaller lakes, tarns, and waterfalls.

The Sierra alpine country is a study in deep contradictions—what looks sere and grey from the trail or from afar turns out to be a lush, barefoot-friendly world where moss and flowers and sedges spring alive under each foot.

No one really goes to Desolation—perhaps too stark from afar, too bold of lines on that topo map—and that's a good reason to do so.



 7-14-2011

BOB CHAMBERLIN Los Angeles Times

ROUGHING IT: Anthony Kernazitskas, right, wife Mandie and son David begin a five-day backpacking trip in the Sierra Nevada near Bishop, which gets 70% of its revenue from outdoor recreation tourists.

Angling for recovery

Bishop tries to woo back more fishermen, hikers and climbers

BY HUGO MARTÍN >>> ONE IN A SERIES OF OCCASIONAL STORIES

At Wilson's Eastside Sports in the Eastern Sierra town of Bishop, employees have been ringing up sales at a hectic pace lately as rock climbers, hikers and mountaineers stock up for the summer season. ¶ But a few blocks away, Brock's Flyfishing Specialists was quiet and empty on a recent Saturday afternoon, the victim of dismal fishing conditions around the Owens Valley. ¶ Heavy snow this winter kept several mountain lakes frozen long into spring, and an early-summer heat wave had created a torrent of snowmelt in nearby streams and rivers. "The busiest season should be now," complained Gary Gunsolley, owner of the fly-fishing shop. But fishing has begun to improve. ¶ Outdoor recreation plays a vital role in California's economy, generating an estimated [See **Bishop**, B4]

Los Angeles Times

Bishop tries to reel in more tourists

[**Bishop,** from B1]

$44 billion in spending annually. But perhaps nowhere in the state are the great outdoors more important to the local economy than in rural towns like Bishop, Wrightwood, Truckee and others that turned to tourism when mining, lumber and similar industries all but dried up.

Bishop, population 3,500, is the best-known of the towns dotting U.S. 395, along the base of the Eastern Sierra. It is also a key refueling stop for Southern California motorists looking to ski, fish, camp or hike in the forests, peaks and valleys along the Golden State's eastern stretch.

As with other towns that depend on the spending of outdoor enthusiasts, Bishop's prosperity is tied to the nation's economic well-being but also to the whims of Mother Nature.

For local merchants, hungry trout and pleasant weather for hiking and camping — particularly in the summer — are as important to the town's fortunes as the nation's unemployment rate and a strong consumer confidence index.

"Outdoor recreation is our bread and butter," said Tawni Thomson, executive director of the Bishop Area Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Bureau. "If it's a stellar weather report, we'll see an increase in business."

Almost 70% of Bishop's revenue comes from tourist spending in hotels, restaurants, grocery stores and sporting goods shops. Bishop's hotel bed tax alone generated $2.2 million last year, or about a third of the city's total general fund revenue. Within the town's two square miles are about two dozen hotels and lodges.

During the day, Bishop's main drag is clogged with pickups pulling trailers and boats or hauling mountain bikes. Crowds pack Erick Schat's Bakkery, a Dutch-themed eatery on 395, to buy cakes, rolls, strudel and the bakery's popular Sheepherder bread.

At one time, nearly every shop along the interstate was family-run. Today, several chain restaurants and hotels have taken root among the mom-and-pop stores.

BOB CHAMBERLIN Los Angeles Times

GETTING HOOKED: Fishing poles on display at Mac's Sporting Goods in Bishop. Shops that cater to anglers suffered in the spring and early summer because heavy snowfall impeded access to mountain fishing resorts.

And while the nation's economic downturn has taken its toll on nearly every business in Bishop, some merchants are bouncing back faster than others.

"Our business has been growing steady," said James Wilson, owner of Wilson's Eastside Sports, a downtown retailer that specializes in rock climbing, mountaineering and camping gear. "We've had an uptick for the past six months."

On the next block, sales have also been picking up at Sage to Summit, a specialty running store that sponsors several high-altitude races in the nearby Sierra Nevada.

"This month we are up considerably over the same month last year," said store manager Jeff Kozak.

But the shops that specialize in fishing gear endured slow sales this spring and earlier this summer because heavy snowfall this winter impeded access to fishing resorts in the Sierra, where the snowpack was 165% of normal levels.

In addition, the state Department of Fish and Game delayed planting fish for up to two weeks in several low-elevation lakes because of ice on the lakes.

At Culver's Sporting Goods, owner Dave Smith said business was down about 30% from 2007, his best year. He blames an unseasonably long winter and continuing economic worries among tourists. "People are only buying the bare essentials here, which is better than nothing," he said.

Located in the valley between the Sierra Nevada and the White Mountains, Bishop has depended on outdoor recreation for its survival since U.S. 395 from Southern California to Inyo County was paved in the 1920s.

Within a few miles of downtown Bishop, visitors can access dozens of fishing lakes, creeks and streams, campsites and trails that lead into the 581,000-acre John Muir Wilderness and Mt. Whitney, the tallest peak in the lower 48 states.

Bishop also draws tourists passing through to ski at Mammoth Mountain or camp in Yosemite National Park. The town gets its biggest crowds during the Memorial Day weekend, when it holds the Mule Days Celebration, a festival that kicks off the packing season and features mule races and other mule contests.

The event has attracted as many as 30,000 visitors, but this year it drew fewer than 20,000. Locals blame the low turnout on the teetering economy and fears over an outbreak of an equine virus.

This summer, Tony Lopez brought his wife and eight children and grandchildren to Bishop from Los Angeles to a private campground a few miles outside town.

He complained that his trip cost him more than $200 for fuel, and he struck out while fishing several lakes north of Mammoth Mountain. "The fishing conditions are really bad this year," Lopez said.

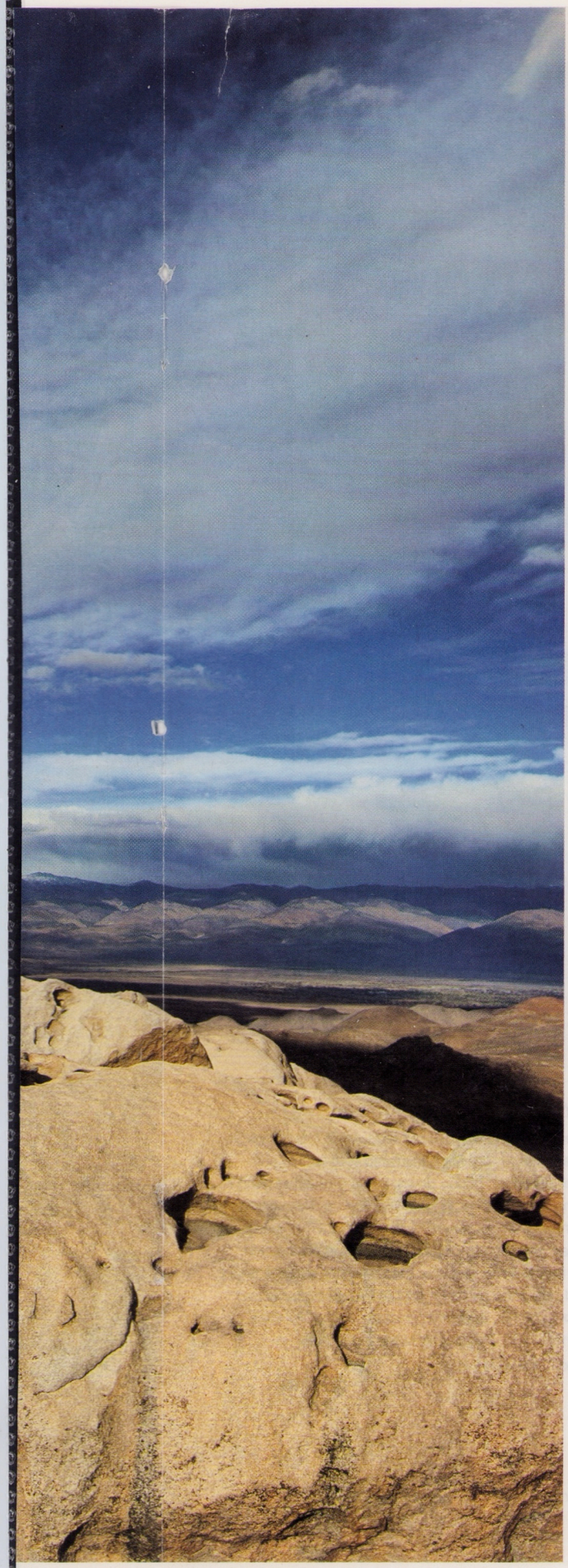
But he looked out over the grassy campgrounds in the shade of towering cottonwood, red willow and black oak trees and said he will probably return to Bishop later this summer.

"It's just so beautiful up here."

hugo.martin@latimes.com

About this series

This is one in a series of occasional articles about the effect of California's outdoors on the state's economy.



Winter Forgot Us

BY CHRIS GAGGIA

2012

I'm a dirt surfer on solstice dawn patrol, zigzagging up the trail to the Druid Stones on the great swell of the Coyote Warp, south of Bishop. Below me, the sunlight is making its long southerly slide up the Owens Valley, illuminating only a narrow swath of the valley floor and the long waves of alluvium shore break that have been closing out for thousands of years.

I should not be running so freely here. Not today. There should be snow – shin deep and daring me to a game of post-hole mumblety-peg with the rock-garbled singletrack below.

Winter forgot us: The Old Man was snoring in a hammock somewhere, the ground beneath him littered with hollow pineapples and gaudy miniature parasols.

First snow of the season drifted down in clumps that sank into the ground like sand crabs in the wash. October 6th. I snapped a self-portrait in the early dusting. Snow – more than any other weather phenomena – demands these souvenirs. The earnest testament of *Look, I was here; it snowed.*

It fell again in November, seemingly in earnest – even the arid White Mountains seemed worthy of their name. I ran with my friend Pablo through the pink and grey volcanic columns and drab cobble of Lower Rock Creek Canyon, the snow piling up the higher we climbed. It looked like winter was slamming the door on fall – beavers abandoned half-gnawed young aspens, leaving pale-as-bone branches rooting at odd angles into grey sky. Pablo and I exchanged goofy grins and hooted our way up the disappearing trail, feeling afloat underfoot and in spirit; higher and deeper into early winter, into the reclaimed adolescence that new tracks bring.

Then somewhere in that slow balancing exchange of dark for light a foul word was uttered: unseasonable.

The faithful pulled old skis from sheds and built symbolic pyres to Ullr. That no wide planks made the pile was a testimony to faith that the snow would come. December wore on and warmed up. Thoughts turned darkly to soaking the pyres with kerosene and striking a match. Or to tossing former-skiers-turned-trail-running blasphemers into the bog. At least I hoped it was to be the bog and not the pyre.

I cross a faint and dirty lattice of snow in the shade at 6,000 feet. Boot-lug doilies remind me of Boy Scout snow hikes in Southern California; we trudged up muddy fire roads in waxed-leather mountaineering boots, searching for a patch of slush to stomp through. Back then, a three-pack of tube socks and army-issue tropical wool pants hastily waterproofed with Thompson's Waterseal protected against the silent killer. I was far more likely to burst spontaneously into flames or asphyxiate with my tent mates than die from hypothermia, but when you read every Jack London tale as a young man you appreciate the danger of winter, the value of bacon fat and dry matches.

The mementos don't last for long. I move off the steeper northern exposures of the trail to the Druid Stones and climb through the gentler terrain connecting Rawson Creek to Coyote Flat, where even on the shortest days, light seems to stick to the sage and boulders like pinyon sap. I reach for zippers, shuck off gloves – it feels more like the year we hiked into Jepson Bowl on San Gorgonio to slash tele arcs through giant sun cups on the 4th of July, looking for either one last lark or an early start. We didn't care which. Skis were skinny then, winter was fat: Like skiing down onto the sundeck at Mammoth fat, or trying to walrus out of a deep tree well fat.

I top out near 9,000 feet, cross the creek and wade through a loose tangle of thorns and rose hips. Three mule deer stare me down from a small aspen stand. Though they probably just want me to quit walking through their breakfast, for a moment I imagine we are sharing the secret stoke of being at a rare place in time.

Just beyond the creek crossing, a seeping spring has transformed into a pygmy glacier at least a hundred feet long and twenty feet wide. Barely a wallow in the fall, the opaque flow is slowly mowing down the brittle brown shafts of wild iris, like a great frost slug deliberately grazing towards the valley below.

I pull out my camera and take a snapshot of the ice and brown grasses, the light and shadow, the blank White Mountains beyond and the blue dome of sky – an earnest, poignant testament. *Look, I was here; it didn't snow, but it froze.*

Ultrarunner **Chris Gaggia** *now frets more about the December Western States lottery than he does the snow pack, but still loves the sight of a hard-earned track down an overlooked pitch. He is a managing editor at Patagonia and lives in Ventura, California, with his wife, Shannon, and their children, Vivian and Jasper.*

THE

JEFFREY PINE JOURNAL

Newsletter of Friends of the Inyo

WINTER 2012 VOLUME X, ISSUE II

Picture Peak and Hungry Packer Lake. *photo: Todd Vogel*

FRIENDS OF THE INYO
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Stewardship Journals

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Bishop, California local history binder content list

Description:

Compiled by Bob Larson (1934-2024).

Collection of magazine articles, newspaper clippings, and other printed ephemera related to the city of Bishop, California in the Owens Valley area.

Item compiled by/from the collection of Robert Wood "Bob" Larson (1934-2024). Bob Larson was a teacher at Salinas High School in Salinas, California for many years. Bob inherited his aunt Enid A. Larson's home in Big Pine, Inyo County, California in 1991. He and his wife Iva "Ivy" Larson (1932-2006) regularly visited Inyo County; following Ivy's death, Bob permanently relocated to Big Pine in 2013. Bob continued his aunt Enid's collection related to Owens Valley History, and he accumulated articles and books on the natural and human history of Inyo County.

From the Inyo County Free Library Local History Room Collection. Scanned by the Inyo County Free Library in June 2026.

Background on Bishop, California:

Bishop, California is the largest community and only incorporated city within Inyo County. Indigenous People lived in the region for at least 10,000 years prior to European contact, namely the Northern Paiute (Numu). The current community of Bishop was established in the 1860s. It was named for Samuel Addison Bishop (1825-1893), a rancher who only briefly lived in the region. The community was first named Bishop Creek (after the nearby body of water) before being renamed Bishop during 1889, and it was established as a city in 1903.

Bishop sits on the north end of Inyo County, and its population was 3,819 at the 2020 US Census. It is now notable for being a center of recreation in the nearby Sierra Nevada Mountains; for its annual Mule Days festival; and for being the economic center of Inyo County.

Binder contents (in order of appearance):

Binder cover: Cover of *Bishop Visitor's Guide* [undated], Bishop Chamber of Commerce.

Ephemera: Bumper sticker promoting Mule Days festival, undated.

Unknown periodical clipping: Image captioned "South Lake Sunrise."

Unknown periodical clipping: Snow-covered mountain peak above a valley floor [possibly Mount Tom over Round Valley, Rovanna or Paradise].

Unknown periodical clipping: Image captioned “Lake Sabrina Skyline – Photo by Vern Clevenger.”

Unknown periodical clipping: Image captioned “Mount Basin, Mount Humphreys, and Mount Tom – Photo by Mike McDermott.”

Unknown periodical clipping: Image captioned “A dirt road through the Buttermilks leads up to Mount Tom – Photo by Mike McDermott.”

Unknown periodical clipping: Image captioned “Boulders dot the Buttermilk Country’s landscape with Mount Humphreys in the background.”

Ephemera: US 395 sticker.

Unknown periodical clipping: Image captioned “North Lake Colors above Bishop, CA.”

Unknown periodical clipping: Image captioned “’Sierra Mountain, near Bishop,’ by Paul Fontaine, Whittier, Nikon FM.”

Unknown periodical clipping: Image captioned “Eastern Sierra Sunrise Over Bishop – Photo by Galen Rowell/Mountain Light Gallery.”

Unknown periodical clipping: Image captioned “A buck sits among the sagebrush in the Owens Valley – Photo by Mike McDermott

Unknown periodical clipping: Image captioned “High snowbanks in Bishop Creek Canyon, 1915.” Early automobile between two tall snowbanks.

Unknown periodical clipping: Image of the mountains and valley floor, likely near Bishop. Image credited to Galen Rowell.

Unknown periodical clipping: Image of snow-covered mountains and valley floor, likely near Bishop.

Unknown periodical clipping: Image captioned “Cardinal Village Skyline – Photo by Vern Clevenger.”

Unknown periodical clipping: Image captioned “Autumn colors brighten up a North Lake landscape. Photo by Vern Clevenger.”

Unknown periodical clipping: Image captioned “The inaugural winner of the Great Shoot-Out for dawn at Farmer’s Pond in Bishop, photograph by Alex Pollini.”

Unknown periodical clipping: “Best of the West – Kimberly Wheaton, Kayaker and Nurse, Los Angeles – Lake Sabrina, California.” Wheaton recalls kayaking at Lake Sabrina in the Sierra Nevada Mountains near Bishop.

Unknown periodical clipping: Image captioned "Early touring in Dutch John Meadows, Bishop Creek Canyon."

Newspaper clipping: *Los Angeles Times*, 30 Oct 2011, p. L8. "High Sierra Thrills and Chills."

Periodical clipping: *Inyo County Visitor's Guide, 11th Edition*, p. 10. "Enjoy Bishop's Big Backyard."

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register* (Bishop CA), unknown date. Image of snow-covered mountains.

Newspaper clipping: *Los Angeles Times*, 13 Dec 2009, p. 90. "Falling for Bishop's Colors." Image of Bishop's City Park in the fall.

Document: Bishop Mural Society Visitor's Guide. Map of 15 murals around the city of Bishop. Undated.

Document: Postcard captioned "Headquarters Building – Parchers Rainbow Camp – South Fork Bishop Creek – Bishop, Calif. – Frashers Foto – Pomona." Postmarked 21 Aug 1931 from Bishop, California. Postcard sent to "Mrs. A.P. Levison" [Althea P. Levison, 1856-1938] care of William Mackey at Nicholasville, Kentucky, from "Jessie" [her daughter-in-law?].

Document: "A Brief History of Bishop California" by Mike Cheuvront. Several pages detailing the history of Bishop, Inyo, California.

Periodical clipping: *Bishop Visitor's Guide*, undated. "Owens Valley and the City of Bishop" by Dave Babb.

Document: Photocopy of "A Walking Tour of Historic Buildings in Downtown Bishop." Double-sided pamphlet providing information about historic structures of Bishop, California.

Unknown document: "'The Other Side of California… the Eastern Sierra." Promotional one-sheet about Bishop, California.

Periodical clipping: *Inside the Eastside 2016*, p. 12-14. "Searching for art – Bishop's murals reveal glimpses of the past" by Kristina Blüm. Listing of murals throughout Bishop, California as of 2016. Second article: "Museums of the Owens Valley – History and culture of Inyo County come alive" by Kristina Blüm.

Document: "Bishop Creek Canyon Camping – INYO National Forest" informational sheet by White Mountain Ranger Station, US Forest Service. Includes details of camp sites and camping rules for the Bishop Creek area. Includes map. [Note states "Rev 1/92", suggesting it was created c. Jan 1992].

Periodical clipping: *Inyo County Visitors Guide Fifth Edition*, p. 11; 13. "Lets Spend Another Day in Bishop" by Bishop Chamber of Commerce. Hand dated "2013."

Unknown periodical clipping: “Bishop Mule Days”, quoted from *Western Mule Magazine*.

Unknown periodical clipping: Sierra Nevada Mountains [?] above valley floor; likely Bishop.

Unknown periodical clipping: “Owens Valley with Bishop Below.”

Unknown periodical clipping: Image of trees with leaves changing color.

Periodical clipping: *Jeffrey Pine Journal*, Vol. VI, Issue I. “Get Out!: Find Hidden Gems – Green & Brown Lakes” by Todd Vogel.

Document: Cover of *High Sierra 2016 Local Search Guide* by Ziplocal. Image shows trees with leaves changing color.

Ephemera: Postcard labeled “Bishop Creek Canyon”, front and reverse.

Periodical clipping: *Backpacker* magazine cover, Oct 1999. Appears to be image of Bishop Creek.

Unknown periodical clipping: “A Beautiful Bishop Stream.”

Periodical clipping: *Inyo County Visitors Guide, Tenth Edition*. “Bishop – The Hub of Inyo County.”

Periodical clipping: *Inyo County Visitors Guide, Seventh Edition*. “Bishop, California – Small Town With a Big Backyard.”

Unknown periodical clipping: “Route 12 – Buttermilk Country.” Describes a driving route into the Buttermilks region near Bishop.

Document: “Buttermilk Country, Horton Lakes and Climbing Mt. Tom” by Eastern Sierra Interpretive Association. Includes map.

Periodical clipping: *Sierra* magazine, Vol. 2, No. 2, May 1972. “Inside the Basin – Was this the work of the Little Ice Age?” by Enid A. Larson. Article on geography of Mt. Tom and Basin Mountain in the Sierra Nevada range.

Document: “Buttermilk Country and Horton Lakes” informational guide by White Mountain Ranger Station, US Forest Service. Includes map.

Periodical clipping: *Mammoth Sierra Magazine*, Nov-Dec 2008, p. 30-31. “A Snow Day to Horton Lake” by Connor Spradlin.

Periodical clipping: *Eastside Magazine*, Spring 2010, p. 12-13. “Circumambulating Mt. Tom – A Sierra pilgrimage” by Stephen Ingram.

Document: “Coyote Flat – Inyo National Forest” guide [created by US Forest Service?]. Details Coyote Flat region near Bishop. Includes map.

Unknown periodical clipping: “Bishop Creek Canyon – Hiking the Eastern Sierra high country above Bishop” by Dave McNeill. Hand dated Jul 2009.

Images: Top: Color photograph captioned “Connie Above Em’s Pond.” Bottom: “Lindner Trail 2009.”

Newspaper clipping (website printout): *Mammoth Times* (Mammoth Lakes CA), [hand dated Oct 2007]. “The Lindner Mine” by Dave McNeill. Concerns trail in the Sierra Nevada Mountains outside of Bishop.

Unknown periodical clipping: “Along the Trail – Exploring the wild Coyote area” by David McNeill [hand dated 30 Aug 2008].

Unknown periodical clipping: “Little Egypt” by Dave McNeill. Concerns Little Egypt area near Bishop; includes map.

Document: “Bishop Area Winter Hiking Trails,” dated Dec 2012. [Created by Bishop Chamber of Commerce?]. Includes information on Pine Creek Crags Trail, Pleasant Valley Gorge Trail, Druid Stones Trail, Lower Rock Creek Trail, Happy Boulders Trail.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 22 Oct 2016. “Feasting on Power” by Ted Williams. Concerns Power Plant 4, Bishop Light and Power Company, and Bishop Creek.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 2 Mar 2019, p. 15. “Happily roaming in the foothills” by Craig Jackson. Article on Little Tungsten Hills near Bishop.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 2 May 2020, p. B1. “[From snow to sand:] Two hikes in one day” by Craig Jackson. Article on North Lake in the Sierra Nevada Mountains near Bishop.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, [hand dated 2014]. “Hiking in Round Valley” by Craig Jackson.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, [hand dated 2014]. “Tungsten Peak” by Craig Jackson.

Unknown periodical clipping, hand dated 2001. “Tungsten triumph.” Article on “Ed Zdon of Bishop” climbing “his 1,000th ascent of the tallest peak in the Tungsten Hills near Bishop.” Page also includes hand drawn (original?) map of the Tungsten Hills area.

Unknown periodical clipping dated July 2006. Article about Ed Zdon and Tungsten Point.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 21 Oct 2017, p. A17. “On Tungsten Peak once again” by Craig Jackson.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 23 Jan 2016, p. 18. “On top of the Tungstens” by Craig Jackson.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 26 Jan 2019, p. 15. “[On my birthday, I climbed a mountain]” by Craig Jackson. Article on Tungsten Peak.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 7 Mar 2020, p. 15. “Exploring the west side” by Craig Jackson. Article on the Tungsten Hills.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 11 Apr 2020, p. 15. “Taking a stroll amongst tall trees” by Craig Jackson. Article on Aspendell area of Bishop.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 3 Jan 2015, p. 16. “Winter wonderland above Aspendell” by Craig Jackson.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 24 Jan 2015, p. 16. “What was once a road, is now a great trail” by Craig Jackson. Article on Discovery Mine Trail.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 3 Sep 2016, p. 16. “Two peaks climbed on Wheeler Crest” by Craig Jackson.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 18 Jun 2016, p. A18. “Welcome back Brown Lake” by Craig Jackson. Article on Brown Lake in the Sierra near Bishop.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 28 Jul 2018. “Colorful scene from the Bishop Pass trail of Long Lake and Mount Goode.”

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, [?] Aug 2018. “Tyee Lake No. 1 is the first of a half dozen lakes up little known Tyee Canyon.”

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, “Mountain Report – Sierra Sojourns – Back to the beginning” by Craig Jackson. Article on Tyee Lakes Trail.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, “Pipeline to beauty and adventure – Sierra Sojourns” by Craig Jackson. Article on Green Lake.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, [no date located]. “first Sierra Sojourn” by Craig Jackson. Article on Tyee Lakes Trail (“The trailhead for the hike to the Tyee Lakes…”)

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 27 Jun 2015, p. A15. “Cascades, lakes, peaks and sheer beauty” by Craig Jackson. Article on hiking around Piute Pass.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 22 Sep 2018, p. 19. “Almost done in by a very cold wind” [title not included in clipping] by Craig Jackson. Article on hiking Vagabond Peak.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 17 Nov 2018, p. A15. “Short, steep and spectacular” [title not included in clipping] by Craig Jackson. Article on Lamark Lakes.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 1 Jul 2017, p. A16. “A sign of things to come” [title not included in clipping] by Craig Jackson. Article on Green Lake.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 6 Jan 2018, p. 15. “An unintentional tradition” [title not included in clipping] by Craig Jackson. Article on lakes around the Bishop Pass area.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 7 Dec 2019, p. B6. “Perfect day of Hurd Peak” by Craig Jackson.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 19 Oct 2019, p. A15. “Birthday bash at Bishop Creek Lodge” [title not included in clipping] by Craig Jackson.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 26 Nov 2016, p. 16. “On top of The Hunchback” [title not included in clipping] by Craig Jackson.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 10 Dec 2016, p. 18. “Back to the beginning” [title not included in clipping] by Craig Jackson. Article on Tyee Lakes.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 16 Feb 2019, p. 19. “A glorious flat spot” [title not included in clipping] by Craig Jackson. Article on hiking Mt. Tom.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, first published 14 Jan 2017, p. A16. “Round Valley snow romp” by Craig Jackson.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, [hand dated 2015]. “romp near Rovana” by Craig Jackson.

Newspaper clipping: *Mammoth Times*, [hand dated 29 Jan 2015]. “Off the trail” by Wendilyn Grasseschi. Article on Owens River Gorge.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, first published 19 May 2018, p. 17. “The soothing sounds of nature” by Craig Jackson. Article on hiking to the George Lake area.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 6 Apr 2019, p. A11. “Down in a gorge” by Craig Jackson. Article on Owens River Gorge.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 7 Feb 2015, p. B3. “Paradise in the Owens Gorge” [full title not included in clipping] by Craig Jackson. Article on Owens Gorge and its abandoned power plants.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 6 Jun 2015, p. 16. “Refreshing hike in Sabrina Basin” [full title not included in clipping] by Craig Jackson.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 9 Apr 2016, p. 18. “Enjoying Sabrina before the crowds arrive” [full title not included in clipping] by Craig Jackson.

Unknown periodical clipping of an alpine mountain lake, hand titled “SABRINA.”

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 19 Mar 2018, p. 17. Photo of Lake Sabrina, Mt. Emerson, and Piute Crags from the George Lake Trail from article titled “The soothing sounds of nature” [title not included in clipping] by Craig Jackson.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 7 Jul 2018, p. 19. “A trek to a pass and a peak” [title not included in clipping] by Craig Jackson. Article on Emerson Lake and Piute Pass.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 8 Feb 2020, p. 15. “Change of plans was a good idea” [title not included in clipping] by Craig Jackson. Article on climbing Piute Pass.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 25 Apr 2020, p. 12. “A relaxing hike turns into a hell of a climb” by Craig Jackson. Article on hiking a peak in Round Valley.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 6 Jun 2020, p. 6. “Another hike after a big hike” by Craig Jackson. Article on hiking to Lower Horton Lake.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 11 Oct 2014. “Hiking historic Horton Canyon” [full title not included in clipping] by Craig Jackson.

Unknown periodical clipping [*The Sheet*?], hand dated 25 Nov 2017. “A Slippery Slope: Hikers observe massive Mule Deer casualties at Bishop, Shepherd’s Pass” by Rea. Article on hikers finding over 100 mule deer has slipped and fallen along their migration path during a recent heavy storm.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 11 Oct 2014. “Coyote” by Rob Pearce. Article on attending the Yribarren Ranch cow drive to Coyote.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 3 Mar 2018, p. A15. “Fun times in Buttermilk Country” [full title not included in clipping] by Craig Jackson. Article on Buttermilk Country / The Buttermilks near Bishop.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 11 Feb 2017, p. 16. “An unfamiliar sight on Buttermilk Road” by Craig Jackson.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 12 Dec 2015, p. 18. “Turkey Day Jaunt” by Craig Jackson. Includes photo captioned “Mount Humphreys and Basin Mountain from the side of Buttermilk Hill.”

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 2 Feb 2019, p. 19. “Brotherly bonding in Buttermilk Country” [full title not included in clipping] by Craig Jackson.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 31 Dec 2016, p. 16. “Back to Buttermilk Country” by Craig Jackson.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 11 Apr 2015, p. 17. “Wandering in Buttermilk Country” [full title not included in clipping] by Craig Jackson.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 14 Mar 2015, p. A14. “Sweeping vistas on the Druid Stones Loop” [full title not included in clipping] by Craig Jackson.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 16 Apr 2016, p. A17. “Enjoying great view amongst the big boulders” by Craig Jackson. Article on Druid Stones Loop.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 2 Oct 2015. “A prize awaits at Treasure Lake” [full title not included in clipping] by Craig Jackson.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, [full title not included in clipping] by Craig Jackson.

Newspaper clipping: *Los Angeles Times*, 25 Oct 1975, p. 26. “50 Years in High Sierra: Mountain Man Guides Others Back to Nature” by Charles Hillinger. Article on Art Schober, longtime Bishop resident and Sierra pack train operator.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 27 Jun 2020, p. 11. “Another hike, another pass” by Craig Jackson. Article on hiking Piute Pass.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 9 Sep 2017, p. 18. “Total peace of mind at Piute Pass” [full title not included in clipping] by Craig Jackson.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 7 Oct 2017. “A decadent hike on my dad’s 89th” [full title not included in clipping] by Craig Jackson. Article on climbing Chocolate Peak.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 1 Dec 2018, p. 15. “In the wilderness, all by myself” [full title not included in clipping] by Craig Jackson. Article on climbing Chocolate Peak.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 22 Dec 2018, p. 19. “The farther I went, the deeper it got” [full title not included in clipping] by Craig Jackson. Article on climbing to the North Lake area in winter.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 5 Sep 2015, p. 18. “Hazy view from The Hunchback” by Craig Jackson.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 12 Sep 2015, p. 18. “Semi-sweet hike to Chocolate Mountain” [full title not included in clipping] by Craig Jackson.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 2 Aug 2014, p. A15. “Satisfy your wanderlust along Chocolate Lakes Loop” by Craig Jackson.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 19 July 2014, p. 18. “Three amazing lakes in 14 beautiful miles” [full title not included in clipping] by Craig Jackson. Review of lakes near Bishop Pass.

Unknown clipping: Photo of alpine lake hand captioned “PICTURE PEAK.”

Newspaper clipping: *The Sheet* (Mammoth Lakes CA), 27 Aug 2016, p. 7. “Wagon wheels can cut through rock: Old Sherwin Toll Road offers a glimpse into the past” by Bodine. Article on wagon wheel ruts and other remnants found along Sherwin Toll Road between Bishop and Mammoth.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 15 Oct 2016, p. 18. “So long hot, hello cold” [full title not included in clipping] by Craig Jackson. Article on Midnight Lake near Lake Sabrina.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 29 Oct 2016, p. 18. “Takin’ it easy” [full title not included in clipping] by Craig Jackson. Article on hiking to the Schober Mine above South Fork Bishop Creek Canyon.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 4 Feb 2017, p. 16. “Making something out of nothing” [full title not included in clipping] by Craig Jackson. Article on birdwatching in Bishop Creek Canal.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 17 Apr 2017, p. A18. “South Lake still smothered in snow” by Craig Jackson.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 20 Jun 2020, p. 15. “Evening hike to a beautiful lake” [full title not included in clipping] by Craig Jackson. Article on hiking to Blue Lake.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 6 Aug 2016, p. 18. “Take a hike and go fishing” Craig Jackson. Article on fishing at Muriel Lake.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 19 Aug 2017, p. A18. “Escape the heat at twelve thousand feet” by Craig Jackson. Article on hiking Bishop Pass into Dusy Basin.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 16 Sep 2017, p. 18. “Get your fill at Hungry Packer Lake” [full title not included in clipping] by Craig Jackson.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, [full title not included in clipping] by Craig Jackson.

Unknown clipping: photo captioned “Storm Clouds over Basin Mountain and Horton Creek.”

Unknown clipping: “Frozen Farmers Pond – Photo by Dennis John.”

Unknown clipping: “Summer Reflection – Farmer’s Pond – Photo by Jerome Winstead.”

Unknown clipping: “Farm’s Pond Near Hwy 6. – Photo by Ross Stone.”

Unknown clipping: “Farmers Pond.”

Unknown document: Map indicating camp grounds and trailheads titled “Bishop Area.”

Brochure: “Inyo County – Adventure Capitol of the World!” with no credit creator. Brochure shows Inyo County attractions, including Eastern California Museum, Laws Museum, hiking locations, Death Valley, and more.

Unknown clipping: Photo of flowers growing through a small wooden fence with snowy mountains in the background. Likely within the Bishop area.

Unknown clipping: “Wildflowers on Coyote Flats West of Big Pine – Howard Walker 2012” and “Fall in Bishop Canyon – Howard Walker.”

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 24 Sep 2016, p. 16. “A short hike to Shangri-La” by Craig Jackson. Article on hiking to Lower Lamarck Lake.

Website printout: Sierra WebPage – The Bishop WebPage at mammothweb.com: “Hiking Trails in the Bishop Area.” Printout dated 21 Jun 1997.

Periodical clipping: *Inyo County Visitors Guide Fourth Edition*, p. 21. Photo captioned “Northfork of Bishop Creek Recreation Area.”

Periodical clipping: *2013 Eastern Sierra Fishing & Vacation Guide*, p. 57. Map of hiking locations in the Sierra Nevada Mountains outside of Bishop.

Document: Informational handout titled “Wilderness Hiking – Bishop Creek – South Fork – Inyo National Forest” by White Mountain Ranger Station (US Forest Service, United States Department of Agriculture). Revised Feb 1993.

Document: Undated informational handout titled “Trails (South) – White Mountain District – Inyo National Forest” by White Mountain Ranger Station. Includes information on trails, passes, basins and peaks around Bishop area.

Unknown document: “Green Lake-Bishop Creek Canyon” by Dave McNeill. Text on the trail to Green Lake.

Document: Undated informational handout titled “Wilderness Hiking – Bishop Creek: North & Middle Forks – Inyo National Forest” by White Mountain Ranger Station. Includes information on trails, passes, basins and peaks around Bishop area. Includes map from Mt. Emerson at the south end to Mt. Thompson at the north end.

Unknown document: [Possibly created by Bishop Chamber of Commerce?] “The Other Side of California… the Eastern Sierra - Bishop.” Information about the Bishop area.

Unknown periodical clipping: Hand dated 14 Jul 2007. “To Grassy and beyond” by Dave McNeill. Article on hiking to Grassy Lake.

Unknown periodical clipping: Hand dated 11 Sep 2004. “What I Did Last Weekend: Rotary Club journeys to Grass Lake” by Ann Fulton.

Unknown document: Photo captioned “Grass Lake.”

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 27 Oct 2018, p. A19. “Beautiful Day at Blue Lake” [full title not included in clipping] by Craig Jackson.

Unknown periodical clipping: [Possibly *Inyo Register*] Hand dated 23 Aug 2008. “Take the Tyee Lakes trailhead for a short day hike or [cuts] […] The Tyee Lakes trail can be an easy hike to the first lake or a more strenuous hike over Table Mountain” by Stan Conger.

Unknown document: “Tyee Lakes Trail” by Dave McNeill.

Unknown periodical clipping: [Possibly *Inyo Register*] Undated. “What I Did Last Weekend: Hike to Marie Louise Lakes” by Ann Fulton.

Periodical clipping: *Mammoth Sierra Magazine*, Aug/Sep 2012, p. 11-12. “Touching the sky: High above Bishop Creek, giant 11,380 Desolation Lake is the bigger of the high-country lakes” by Wendilyn Grasseschi.

Newspaper clipping: *Los Angeles Times*, 14 Jul 2011, p. B1. “Angling for recovery: Bishop tries to woo back more fishermen, hikers and climbers” by Hugo Martin.

Unknown periodical clipping: Hand dated 2012. “Winter Forgot Us” by Chris Gaggia. Article on hiking in the Druid Stones area south of Bishop.

Periodical clipping: *The Jeffery Pine Journal: Newsletter of Friends of the Inyo*, cover of Winter 2012 issue featuring a photo captioned “Picture Peak and Hungry Packer Lake” by Ted Vogel.

[Revised 2026-6-08]